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VOGUE

January 2020



LADY BIRD
MODEL GIGI HADID WEARS A VERSACE DRESS, BANDEAU TOP, AND BAG. LOUIS VUITTON SHOES. PHOTOGRAPHED BY SEAN THOMAS.

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Cover Look Fantastic Four
This month, *Vogue* celebrates four fearless creative forces, role models, and mothers with a quartet of covers. FROM LEFT: **STELLA MCCARTNEY:** McCartney and her children (clockwise from top left), Bailey, Miller, Beckett, and Reiley, all wear Stella McCartney. Hair, George Northwood; makeup: Kirstin Piggott. **ASHLEY GRAHAM:** Oscar de la Renta caftan. Azlee black enamel rings. Irene Neuwirth tourmaline ring. Hair, Sally Hershberger; makeup, Hannah Murray. **CARDI B:** Michael Kors Collection dress. Cartier earring and rings. Tiffany & Co. bracelet. Jimmy Choo shoes. Hair, Tokyo Stylez; makeup, Hannah Murray. **GRETA GERWIG:** Valentino dress. Marc Jacobs earring. Monique Péan obsidian ring. Hair, Sally Hershberger; makeup, Hannah Murray. Details, see In This Issue. **Photographed by Annie Leibovitz. Fashion Editor: Tonne Goodman.**

HADID: FASHION EDITOR: TABITHA SIMMONS. HAIR, RYAN MITCHELL; MAKEUP, ERIN PARSONS. PRODUCED BY SELECT SERVICES. DETAILS, SEE IN THIS ISSUE.

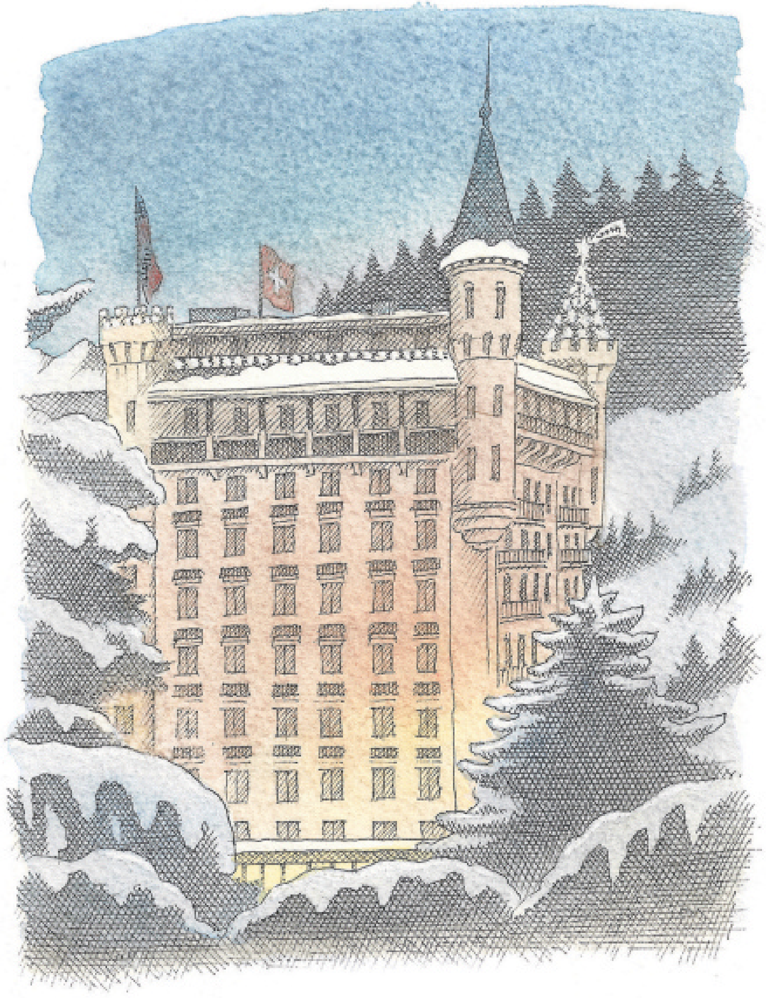

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THE Values OF Vogue

THIS PAST SEPTEMBER, during the Paris collections, every Editor in Chief of *Vogue*—there are 26 in total around the world—met to discuss a topic important to all of us. We decided that it was the right moment to set out a mission statement articulating what we stand for, and strive for, in an increasingly fraught and complicated world. You can read that statement below. It's the first time that *Vogue* has come together in this way, and we're all very proud to have done so: While we might engage with our readers in many different languages, we can also speak with one voice.

For over a century *Vogue* has empowered and embraced creativity and craftsmanship, celebrated fashion, and shined a light on the critical issues of the time. *Vogue* stands for thought-provoking imagery and intelligent storytelling. We devote ourselves to supporting creators in all shapes and forms. *Vogue* looks to the future with optimism, remains global in its vision, and stands committed to practices that celebrate cultures and preserve our planet for future generations. We speak with a unified voice across 26 editions standing for the values of diversity, responsibility, and respect for individuals, communities, and for our natural environment.

All the Editors in Chief of *Vogue*



Le Gstaad Palace

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Cuvée Rosé, chosen by the best.



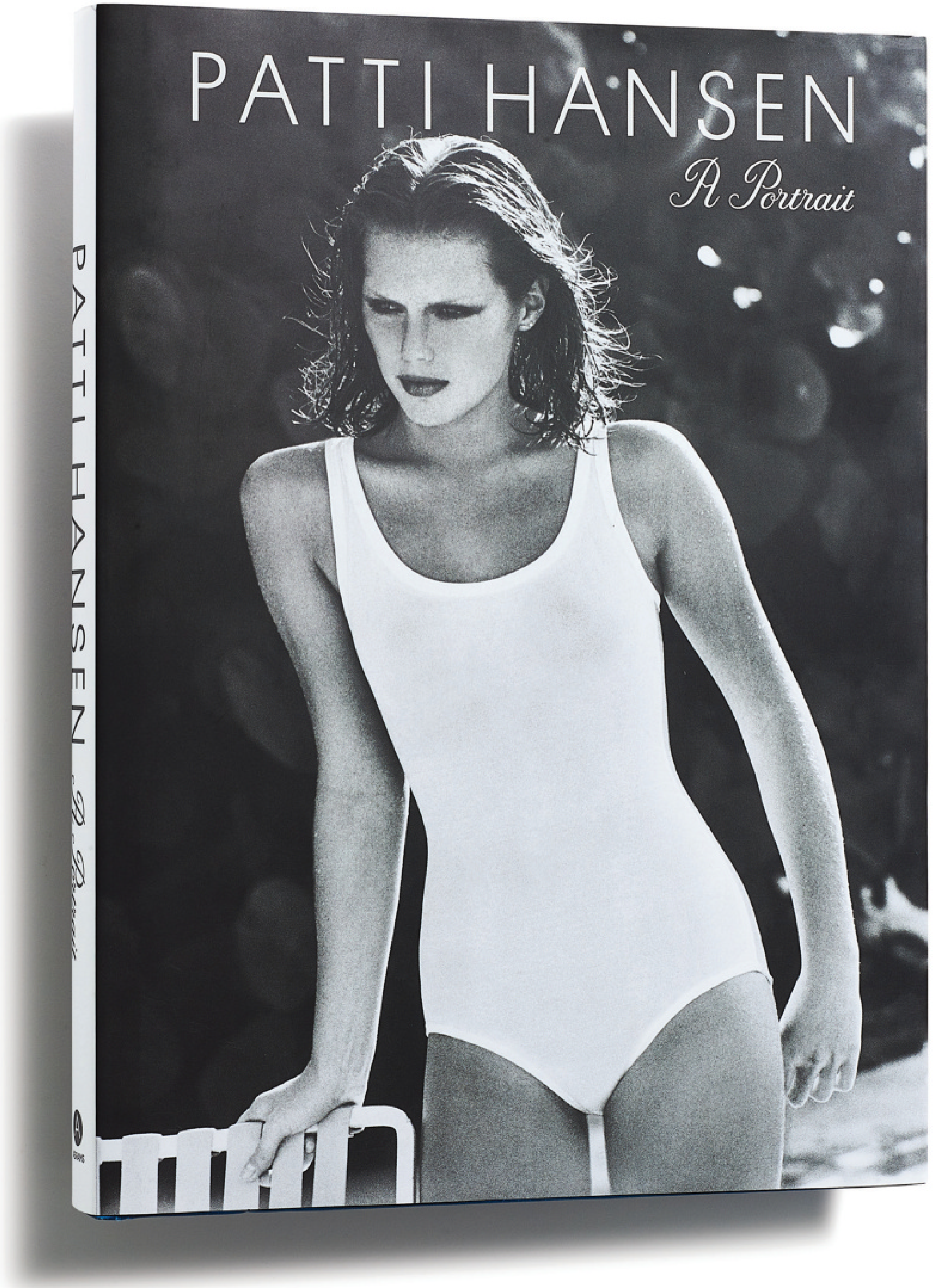
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VOGUE



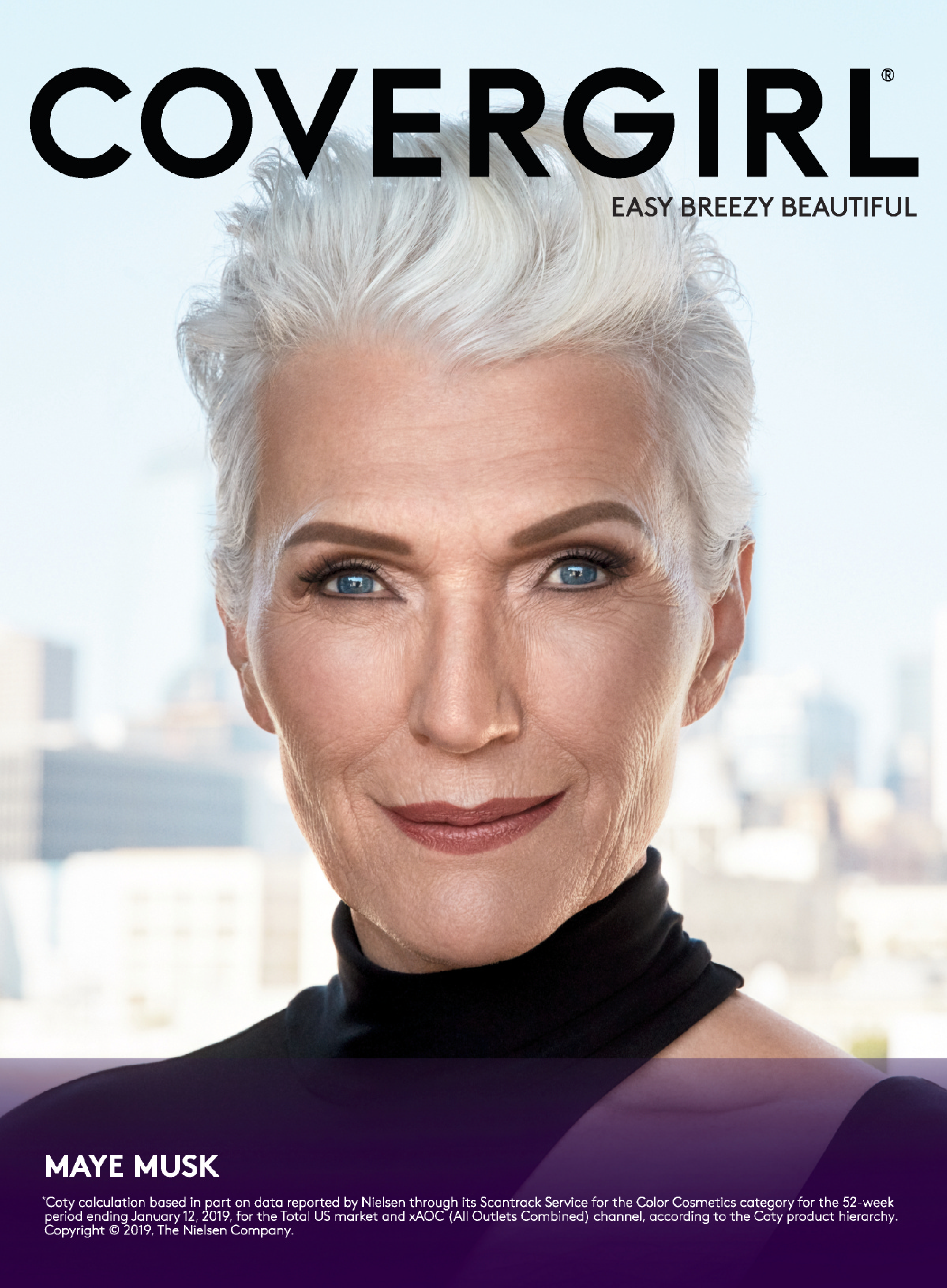
One of the most influential faces of the twentieth century, Patti Hansen graced the cover of *Vogue* twelve times during the 1970s. *Patti Hansen: A Portrait* tells the story of her astonishing career and continuing influence through groundbreaking visuals. The book tracks Hansen's 40 years in the pages of *Glamour* and *Vogue* and includes work by legendary photographers such as Richard Avedon, Irving Penn, Arthur Elgort, Annie Leibovitz, and Steven Meisel.

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The Fires This Time

What can one person do about the disastrous deforestation in the Amazon? An act of resistance gave Brazilian journalist Vanessa Barbara hope.

It was a Monday afternoon when day turned into night in the city of São Paulo. I was visiting an expensive nursery school for my 13-month-old daughter, trying to look remotely worthy of such a sophisticated institution. Although it was not supposed to rain that day, the sky suddenly disappeared behind a dense layer of low, heavy clouds. A two-year-old boy stepped out of his classroom, rubbed his eyes, and looked inquisitively at the principal, who said, "No, it isn't night yet, dear, and your father's not here to pick you up. Go back inside."

Later that day, meteorologists struggled to explain the midday darkness. They eventually blamed low-lying clouds from a cold front combined with smoke from the fires in the Amazon rain forest, thousands of miles away. Many people saw this as a sign. While we Brazilians were carrying out our day-to-day activities in oblivion, our rain forest was sending an unequivocal distress signal. How were we going to answer? Was there anything we could do besides posting angry rants on social media?

In August, Brazil's National Institute for Space Research reported an 84% increase in fires in the country compared with the same period in 2018. More than half of these were in the Amazon region. Thanks to images from NASA and NOAA satellites, one can see the extent of the devastation: dozens of smoldering patches of land clouding the otherwise dark-green landscape. The smoke from the flames had already swept across several Brazilian states, including São Paulo.

These were not natural wildfires—nor caused by weather and other factors, like the recent, devastating blazes in California. They were likely set by cattle ranchers, farmers, and loggers to clear the land for commercial purposes. Their method is well known: First they pull trees by their roots, using tractors equipped with chains. They wait a few months for the dry season,

DARK SKIES
DEFORESTATION IN THE AMAZON (ABOVE) HAS SKYROCKETED UNDER BRAZIL'S RIGHT-WING PRESIDENT JAIR BOLSONARO.

JOAO LAET/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

and when the piles of wood have finally dried, they set fire to everything.

It's been going on for decades. For a while, between 2004 and 2014, a stricter enforcement of environmental laws had effectively curbed the pace of deforestation. But over time, a coalition of landowners, soy producers, and other rural players—the so-called agribusiness caucus—has gained more and more power in Brazilian politics, pushing its economic interests further into the forest. Then came the election of far-right politician Jair Bolsonaro—a notorious anti-environmentalist who sneers at the rights of indigenous people—and all hell broke loose.

Landowners have felt emboldened by the new president's rhetoric. Some of them even coordinated a recent "fire day" in the northern state of Pará to declare their right to burn land. Worse, several reports have described a gruesome uptick in attacks on indigenous territories since Bolsonaro won the presidency, with several cases of homicide, stoning, and arson. Last January, dozens of men armed with machetes, chainsaws, and firearms entered the protected territory of the Uru-eu-wau-wau tribe to claim land for commercial purposes. They marked trees and staked out plots for sale. For months the tribespeople have fought back. Now part of this territory is on fire.

> The case for eating meat is conservative, as conservative as the people who voted for Bolsonaro. They'd argue it's natural, normal, and even necessary

So there we were in the streets of one of the world's largest cities as the sky turned dark. Ironically, my husband and I were interested in that upscale nursery school mainly because it is one of only a few in the neighborhood with a large outdoor area, a place where children are not confined to a concrete room depressingly devoid of windows. In a dense city like this, where trees are such a luxury, it can be hard to believe there's hope for the Amazon.

But I've long since learned that being Brazilian is an exercise in helplessness. Protesting in the streets, organizing strikes, or calling the United Nations to beg for international attention—it can all feel beside the point given the Brazilian government's legendary ability to ignore its own people. Sometimes policies temporarily change—under the heat of media pressure, perhaps—only to worsen exponentially later, when the news cycle has moved on.

The feeling of helplessness is acute for someone like me, a writer and journalist who is constantly taking stock of her country. One of my columns for the *New York Times,* for instance, praised the United Nations' special rapporteurs—independent experts who monitor countries on behalf of the international body. I'd learned about them through my work: Whenever I researched a serious Brazilian matter related to, say, the environment, or the rights of the indigenous people, I would find out there had been a stern, accurate statement from a special rapporteur condemning exactly this situation. And the statements were always ignored. "Let's keep working together on being neglected," I wrote at the end of my piece. And I meant it.

But helplessness is no way to live, or else why would I have chosen to have a child? There is something endearingly foolish about a couple deciding to bring a new life into this world, I think. And things were not good when I decided to take the leap of faith: President Dilma Rousseff had been recently impeached on controversial charges of manipulating the federal budget. The incumbent government was enjoying an approval rating of 3%—almost lower than the poll's margin of error. And yet I decided to go for it. I mean, the future had to be brighter, right? Little did I know that I would be nursing my tiny baby when the unimaginable happened: Jair Bolsonaro elected the 38th president of Brazil. The retired military man who praised the country's history of dictatorship and who disparaged women, blacks, and homosexuals. The same man who vowed to put an end to all activism in Brazil. Indeed things *could* get worse. At home, watching the returns come in, I cried so much that my daughter stopped nursing to look up at me. She was wearing a rainbow onesie that day.

The grim new reality gave fresh resonance to another leap of faith I'd taken some years before. This was at another moment of powerlessness—personal and professional—and I'd first considered such remedies as studying medicine, opening a turtle sanctuary, or joining one of the remarkable environmental NGOs that work in Brazil. Feeling unsuited for any of it, I settled instead on one of the few true freedoms that we have: the choice of what to eat. I became a vegetarian.

At first I was guided only by ethical reasons: Animals are sentient beings that feel pain and are due certain moral rights. Killing a living creature seemed to me justified only in extreme circumstances; consuming an animal just for your own pleasure, convenience, or out of habit was morally wrong. I felt strongly about this, but I knew it would be difficult—for a number of reasons—to stop eating meat. I hate to cook; there are very few vegetarian restaurants in this city that open for dinner. I've had anemia before; I struggle with chronic depression. None of it would be easy, I complained to a vegan friend. (Until then, the only thing we had in common was our commitment to amateur astronomy.)

He just replied, "You are seeing this from the wrong point of view." When we moan about difficulty, what we really mean is we're not willing to stand up for fundamental change. Try talking about UP FRONT>20

difficulty to a cow waiting in the line to get a captive bolt in her skull. Try talking about difficulty to indigenous tribes being exterminated to make room for livestock. Would I resign myself to helplessness? How serious was my indignation? I decided to get my act together; I consulted a nutritionist and stopped eating meat on the same day.

The fact that most Brazilians don't think, even for a moment, about vegetarianism—that we are one of the world's most carnivorous countries—spurred me along in my defiance. The case for eating meat is conservative, as conservative as the people who voted for Bolsonaro. They'd argue that meat-eating is natural, normal, and even necessary. They'd appeal to tradition, evoke images of Christmas turkeys roasting in wealthy suburban homes. According to their worldview, vegetarians are outsiders, along with homosexuals, feminists, atheists, environmentalists, indigenous people, blacks, and immigrants—the same groups that Bolsonaro once swore to eradicate. Such an honor, I thought.

Gradually my choice became more about politics—and about the climate. These facts are fairly well known: Going vegetarian is one of the four biggest environmental contributions a single person can make—along with having one fewer child, living car-free, and avoiding air travel (especially transatlantic flights). The livestock sector is horribly inefficient, representing nearly 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions, while providing just 18% of calories and a third of the protein consumed around the world. In 2010, the U.N. reported that a significant reduction of the impact from greenhouse gases could be possible only with "a substantial worldwide diet change, away from animal products." And in October 2018, a report in *Nature* argued that a shift toward plant-based diets was *essential* to mitigate the effect of greenhouse gases. According to the research, citizens from rich nations such as the United States would need to cut beef consumption by 90%.

And, of course, Brazil is the world's largest exporter of beef and the second-largest soy producer. (Around 70% of the world's soybean ends up as feed for animals—not for direct human consumption.) Livestock production is by far the leading cause of deforestation in the Amazon. According to a 2004 report from the World Bank, medium- and large-scale cattle ranching accounts for 80% of all converted land in the forest. Which is probably why President Bolsonaro recently declared that environmental issues matter only to "vegans, who eat only vegetables." He was speaking for the status quo.



FAMILY TIES
THE AUTHOR WITH HER DAUGHTER, MABEL, PHOTOGRAPHED IN THE BRAZILIAN CITY OF JUIZ DE FORA

In the end, we didn't choose the upscale school for our daughter—and not only because it was too expensive. I feared she would grow up among rich, entitled children of the same conventional families, and she would lack a diversity of perspective. We decided to hang around a few more months on the waiting list for the public nursery schools, which are unpretentious but have very nice teachers. I supposed she would be more comfortable there, with her rainbow onesie and her feminist toys. (She has a knitted Molotov cocktail, which we often throw at the chauvinist Easter Bunny. She also wears a secondhand onesie that says PRINCE, which my neighbors find outrageous.)

I have to admit I feared the conversations I would have with the other parents in that upscale school. Already I catch myself dodging small talk in order to hide the fact that I'm a vegetarian; I've also learned to make excuses to skip barbecues or feijoadas, serving a traditional Brazilian dish made with black beans and pork. I mostly try not to sound judgmental, since I feel that people here can see my dietary choices as a threat to their way of life. After all, everyone knows that a woman should cook, obey her husband, and honor the Lord by diligently consuming His creatures. If I refuse to follow these rules, there must be something wrong with me. Maybe I'm secretly trying to boycott the Brazilian meat industry. Maybe I'm not patriotic. Maybe this will become one of the many subversive acts that call for punishment.

I am equally aware that the efforts of a single person are barely a scratch in the grand scheme of things. A vegetarian mother does not create a greener, compassionate world for her child (and my daughter is eating meat . . . for now. I'll let her decide for herself when she's older). I've never been the one to make decisions by weighing their consequences, for better or worse, so in a way it doesn't matter if my vegetarianism has any effect on whether Brazilians continue to raise and kill animals for food. Brazil may indeed become a country with no place for indigenous people, homosexuals, blacks, feminists, environmentalists, and vegetarians. The fires may persist, the smoke continuing to gather. But I will choose not to participate in that grim barbecue. □



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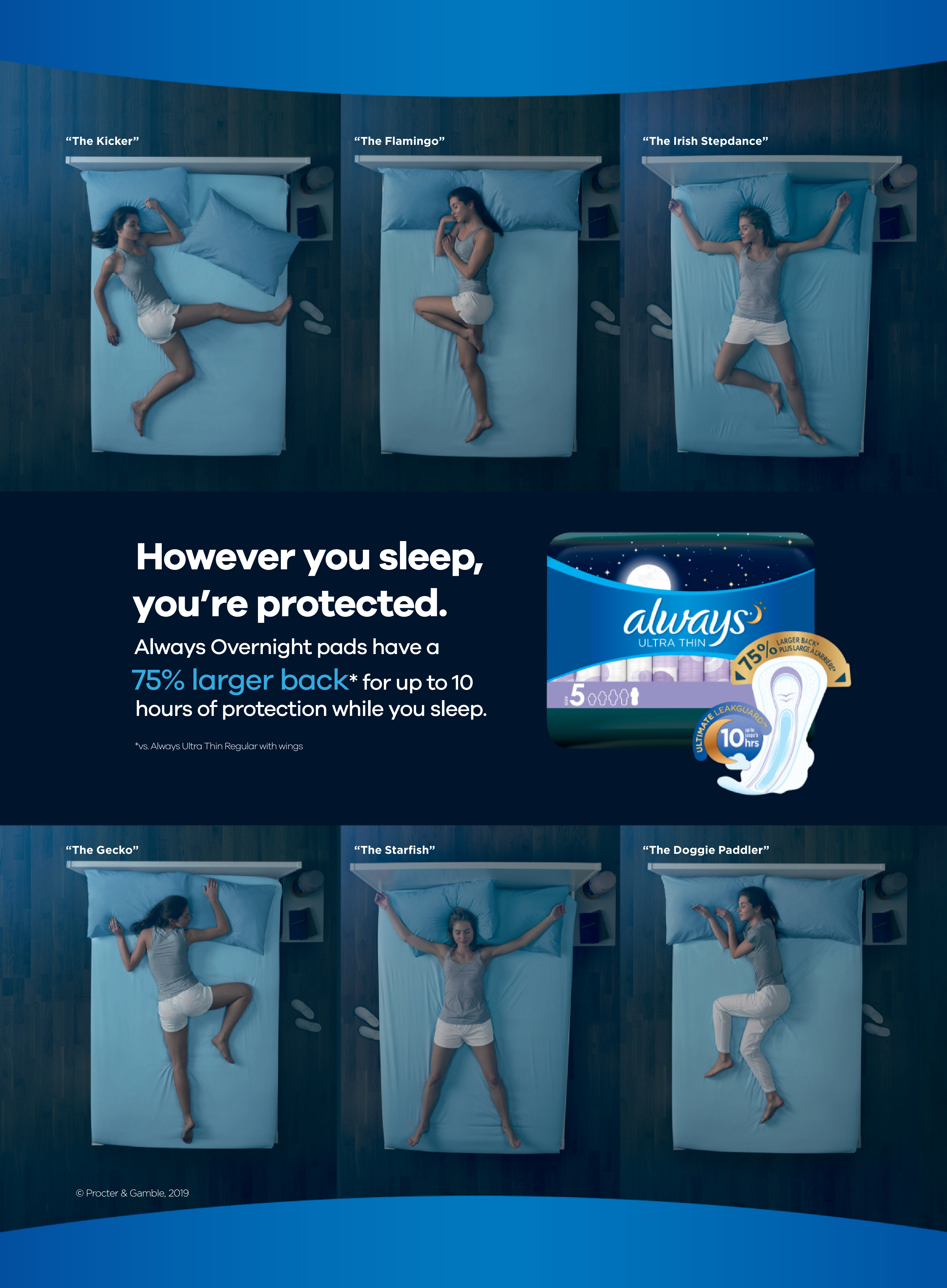
Unplain Jane

A new adaptation of Austen's unfinished novel stars the effervescent Rose Williams.

TALENT Rose Williams is waiting on the steps of the Royal Academy of Arts in London—a grand 18th-century portico that could easily frame a Jane Austen heroine. It's an appropriate backdrop, since the 25-year-old will soon star in the television adaptation of Austen's *Sanditon* (*Masterpiece* on PBS) as the lively Charlotte Heywood. If the character's name is unfamiliar, that's likely because *Sanditon* was only partially written at the time of the author's death in 1817. The manuscript provided British screenwriter TALENT>26

THE PLUNGE
A CHANCE AUDITION FOR AN ACQUAINTANCE'S SHORT FILM JUMP-STARTED WILLIAMS'S CAREER. ERDEM DRESS. HUNTER BOOTS. DETAILS, SEE IN THIS ISSUE. PHOTOGRAPHED BY OLIVIA ARTHUR. FASHION EDITOR: MOLLY HAYLOR.

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LĀNAʻI

Andrew Davies (responsible for the *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation that brought us Colin Firth in a wet shirt as Mr. Darcy) just enough material to carry him through three-quarters of one episode. The rest springs from Davies's vivid imagination but remains true to core components of the work: the unusual seaside resort setting; its clever protagonist; and perhaps most striking, a teenage heiress from the West Indies, Miss Lambe (played by Crystal Clarke), whose presence causes a stir among the fashionable set. "When we see people of color in period dramas, some people say it's not historically accurate," Williams says, animatedly. "Actually, it is. Miss Lambe is in the book. No one can argue that this is just trying to tick the diversity box."

Born in Ealing, West London, Williams and her younger sister were encouraged to draw and paint from an early age. Her mother worked in the costume department of the BBC; her father, now a gardener, took various jobs in broadcasting when she was growing up. Williams studied fashion and moonlighted at London's Dover Street Market. Today as we drink tea in one of the Royal Academy's cafés, an abiding love for clothes is evident in her all-black outfit: vintage velour trousers, an early-'90s leather jacket, and the latest Nike Shox sneakers. But a certain disillusion with fashion as a career led her to assist her mother on shoots, and one day, she had a revelation. "The actress was playing a sarky, cool teenage girl, and I said to myself, I want to play a character like that." She joined a few online casting sites, made a show reel, and began to take jobs as an extra. At 20, she was chosen to appear in *Reign,* a TV drama filmed in Toronto that chronicles the life of a young Mary, Queen of Scots. Cast for three episodes, she stayed for three years. "It was a massive jump to be in a different country, living by myself," she says. During breaks, she would head to Los Angeles, a city she has come to love and where she currently rents an apartment. The city is a "watering hole for people who are willing to spread their wings," she says.

Initially asked to audition for a supporting role on *Sanditon,* Williams turned down the opportunity because of prior commitments. Then the chance to play the lead arose. "I did a tape over the weekend, and by Monday evening they said 'The part is yours.' " A self-taught crash course on Austen followed, with long trips to London's National Portrait Gallery to stare at Regency-era paintings. She began filming on her 25th birthday. "I didn't think anyone knew until the end of the day when they brought me a cake," she says.

As we finish our tea, Williams tells me about what's coming up next: a role in a supernatural film set in a decaying hospital in the '70s. But first, there's tomorrow to contend with. She is currently booked on a flight back to L.A. and has to decide whether or not to postpone it. Today and generally, uncertainty doesn't seem to bother her. "The most stressy moments are when I am most peaceful," she says. "When we're struggling to finish a scene, when we're losing the light—that's when I feel the most focused and present. It's such a gift to have found that."—SARAH CROMPTON

WELLNESS

Focus Group

Is getting a cognitive reboot from nootropics as smart as it sounds?



TOP OF MIND
INTRIGUE—AND UNCERTAINTY—ABOUNDS WITH THE NEWLY POPULAR BRAIN BOOSTERS.

Nootropics are worth a try, I think to myself while riding a subway car in the wrong direction—for the second time in a week. Long beloved by Silicon Valley biohackers, and broadly defined as substances that improve mental capacity—from caffeine to exotic herbs—the popular supplements are finding their way from Reddit threads to modern-day wellness ubiquity. Packed with memory-fortifying Lion's Mane mushroom, Moon Juice's malty and delicious Brain Dust powder is flying off shelves at Sephora, while San Francisco–based Nue Co's attention-enhancing Nootro-Focus capsules were on heavy rotation backstage at Ulla Johnson's spring 2020 show. (Makeup artist Romy Soleimani enjoyed the brain boosters with a fleet of models looking to ace the catwalk.)

But Karam Radwan, M.D., associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience at the University of Chicago, urges vigilance, as much of the research on nootropics' long-term effects isn't in yet—and side effects, such as negative interactions with prescription drugs, can be serious. "You have to be careful," he insists.

Undeterred, I imbibe Beekeeper's Naturals' B.LXR Brain Fuel—a honey-thick syrup with a worker-bee secretion believed to increase productivity—and Kin Euphoric's bitter, effervescent beverage, which features a blend of reputedly mind-altering ingredients, including a dose of L-theanine, the stimulating compound found in green tea. Straight capsules of the stuff keep me alert, albeit eerily detached, during the day, and energized enough to go to a late-afternoon yoga class.

"L-theanine tends to generate an alpha brain-wave state, similar to meditation," Dan Engle, M.D., a Boulder, Colorado–based psychiatrist with a specialty in neurology, tells me. "If you don't take enough, you'll feel no effect, and if you take too much, the effects can be detrimental," he says, noting that proper dosage can take time to figure out. Looking for a more proven way to get mental clarity? "Exercise!" Engle offers. "It's one of the best nootropics in the world."—LAUREN MECHLING

PHOTO: PICTURES NOW/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO. COLLAGE: PARKER HUBBARD.

Game Changer

Louis Vuitton's new capsule collection with League of Legends brings Parisian high fashion to the world of online gaming—and vice versa.





FASHION In late October, Nicolas Ghesquière posted an Instagram image of Qiyana, a star of the multiplayer online battle-arena game League of Legends, in a limited-edition Louis Vuitton "prestige skin." The Vuitton artistic director of women's collections isn't one of the eight million people who simultaneously play the game each day—launched in 2009, it's one of the world's most popular esports—or one of the nearly 100 million unique viewers who watched last year's world championship. But augmented reality—along with an abiding love of sci-fi and time travel—is absolutely a personal obsession.

"It's fascinating—the frontier where fantasy begins and reality ends," says the designer. "Where it's especially interesting for us is how a character that was built in the game becomes an influence on the real world, and how people will want to dress in her looks." To facilitate that, Ghesquière has created virtual outfits for Qiyana and her fellow League of Legends champion Senna—"skins," in gamer parlance—that players can earn in-game (or buy, if their battle skills aren't up to snuff). For the real world, he's combined the LV and LoL logos and produced a capsule collection of leather goods and street-smart, sporty riffs on the in-game clothes, in color-blocked tech jersey and chrome leather, that hits stores this month.

URBAN LEGEND
ABOVE LEFT: NICOLAS GHESQUIÈRE WITH QIYANA, A VIRTUAL CHAMPION FROM LEAGUE OF LEGENDS. ABOVE: MODEL CYNTHIA ARREBOLA WEARS A LOUIS VUITTON X LEAGUE OF LEGENDS LEATHER JACKET, T-SHIRT, LEGGINGS, AND BAG; SELECT LOUIS VUITTON STORES. DETAILS, SEE IN THIS ISSUE. HAIR, ESTHER LANGHAM; MAKEUP, PETROS PETROHILOS. PHOTOGRAPHED BY DANIEL JACKSON. FASHION EDITOR: TONNE GOODMAN.

PRODUCED BY WILLIAM GALUSHA; SPECIAL THANKS TO LMCC'S ARTS CENTER AT GOVERNORS ISLAND AND MICHAEL WANG: *EXTINCT IN NEW YORK*, ORGANIZED BY SWISS INSTITUTE.



This isn't the first time Ghesquière has intersected with the online-gaming world—he enlisted Final Fantasy's Lightning to star in Louis Vuitton ads in 2016—but the League of Legends partnership takes brand synergies to another level entirely. Qiyana and Senna are members of a virtual hip-hop group, True Damage, featuring vocals from real-life singers and musicians, that released a music video for their song "Giants" at the 2019 LoL World Championship Finals in November. (Qiyana wears a Ghesquière-designed Louis Vuitton look in the video.) If the experience of 2018's virtual LoL group, the K-pop band K/DA, is any indication, True Damage's tune will likely chart. And if esports are now producing hit songs IRL, why not sold-out Vuitton Speedys and Neverfulls?

"What's exciting about this project is how alive it is," Ghesquière says. "Millions of gamers will jump in, and if they reach a higher level of difficulty they'll be able to enjoy Qiyana and

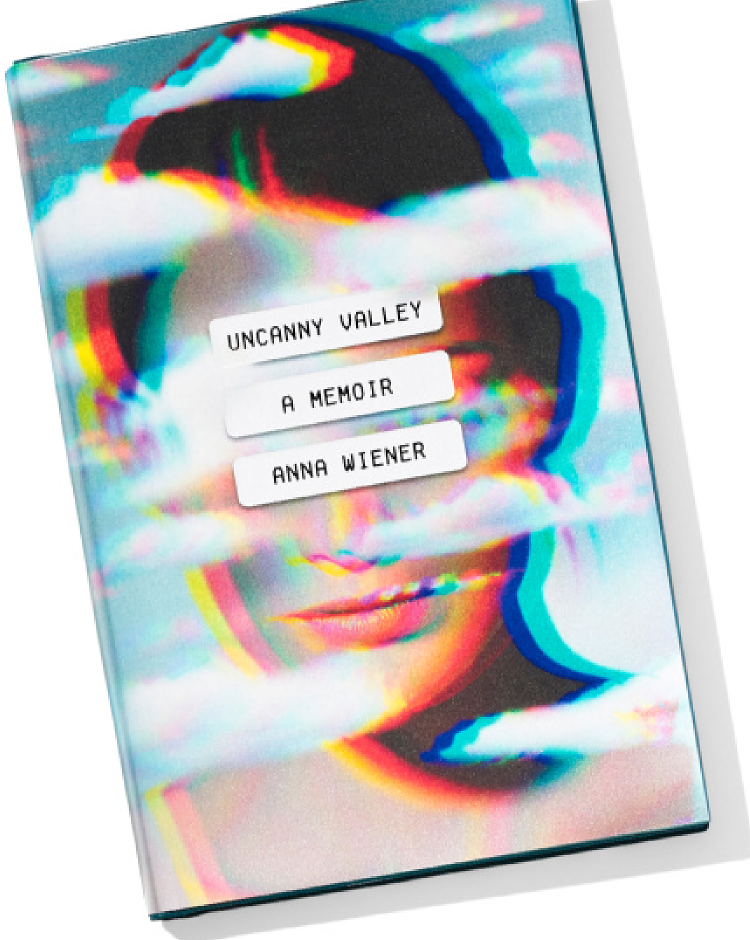
"To be able to dress in virtual reality as you wish—that's a possibility now"

Senna in their Vuitton looks. Look at how kids love Snapchat and the transformations they can make," he continues. "This is an extension of that. To be able to dress in virtual reality as you wish—that's a possibility now." Ghesquière was extremely impressed with the ways in which League of Legends' developers brought his designs to life. "You feel the fabric: how it's moving, the weight of the texture. It's quite incredible."

Will customers be shopping for Louis Vuitton products for their online avatars in the not-too-distant future? Probably yes. Consider the recently launched fashion-styling game Drest, in which users pay for virtual designer goods.

At the moment, though, the real excitement of the League of Legends matchup for Ghesquière is how it could augment his work in Vuitton's ateliers. "Going forward, we might be able to design in virtual reality and see what impact our products would have on the public, and only then realize them in real life," he says. "It's exciting how this virtual world is opening a new voice for creativity."—NICOLE PHELPS

JOSEPHINE SCHIELE



#Slackers

BOOKS *Fun* is the operative word in **Such a Fun Age** (Putnam), Kiley Reid's delectably discomfiting debut. The buzzed-about novel takes a thoroughly modern approach to the timeless upstairs-downstairs trope, centering on a black babysitter watching over a white influencer's two-year-old. From the opening scene, in which 25-year-old Emira Tucker is apprehended by a supermarket security guard who suspects the nanny of kidnapping, the spring-loaded tale charts a battle of best intentions. Told from alternating points of view, the novel loops through vibrant vignettes set in reggaeton nightclubs and Philadelphia farmers markets before landing firmly on one side of the maternal divide. A former babysitter herself, Reid fills the narrative with ripped-from-the-shift details about the slippery intimacies between family members and a $16-an-hour employee. This page-turner goes down like comfort food, but there's no escaping the heartburn.



If we must live in a surveillance state, it might as well be under the attentive eye of Anna Wiener, whose memoir, **Uncanny Valley** (Farrar, Straus and Giroux/MCD), is equal parts enchanting and subversive. The New York native graduated into a recession and found a job at a New York literary agency that paid mostly in prestige. Seduced by tech's lucre and ostensible utopianism, Wiener moved west, where life proved eerily comfortable for a hard-driving millennial. Her account of living inside the Bay Area bubble reads like HBO's *Silicon Valley* filtered through Renata Adler; Wiener is a trenchant cultural cartographer, mapping out a foggy world whose ruling class is fueled by empty scripts: "People were saying nothing, and saying it all the time." The book's author does the very opposite.—LAUREN MECHLING



The Volcano Lovers

At the new Nayara in Costa Rica, nature and nurture go hand in hand.

TRAVEL When Leo Ghitis, the owner of Nayara Tented Camp, first purchased the hilly landscape bordering Costa Rica's Arenal Volcano National Park, all the trees had been razed to create a cow pasture—emblematic of a troubling trend, where one-third of the forest in the country has disappeared in the last 70 years. "Bringing back the rain forest was a huge objective. We wanted it to be the way it was," Ghitis says. So he hired a landscape architect from Australia who specialized in reforesting the land with guarumo trees—a species beloved by the Costa Rican sloths, which had suffered due to the devastation of their habitat. The resort now includes a flourishing sloth sanctuary: So far, 15 furry, three-toed creatures have moved right in, enjoying the care of an on-site naturalist who has even named them.

Surrounded not only by sloths but also by howler monkeys, brightly plumed toucans, and a caiman-filled river, the Tented Camp is the third property within the luxurious Nayara Resorts' complex, and perhaps the one most deeply embedded within its natural environment. Private plunge pools are filled with crystalline water from the volcano. There are also seven interconnected mineral hot springs—a bubbling natural water park in the middle of the jungle. Volcanic vistas appear from open-air yoga studios, and suspended footbridges link the well-appointed, elevated tents. But follow the sloths' lead while traversing the canopy, and take it nice and slow.—ELISE TAYLOR

PEAK PLEASURE
NAYARA'S POOL PARASOLS ECHO THE ARENAL VOLCANO'S FAR-OFF APEX.



FINE LINES
WINTER STONE'S SIGNATURE ETCHINGS FEATURED ON HIS PREFERRED CANVAS (ABOVE) AND IN THE NEW COLLABORATION (FAR RIGHT).

Balm Squad

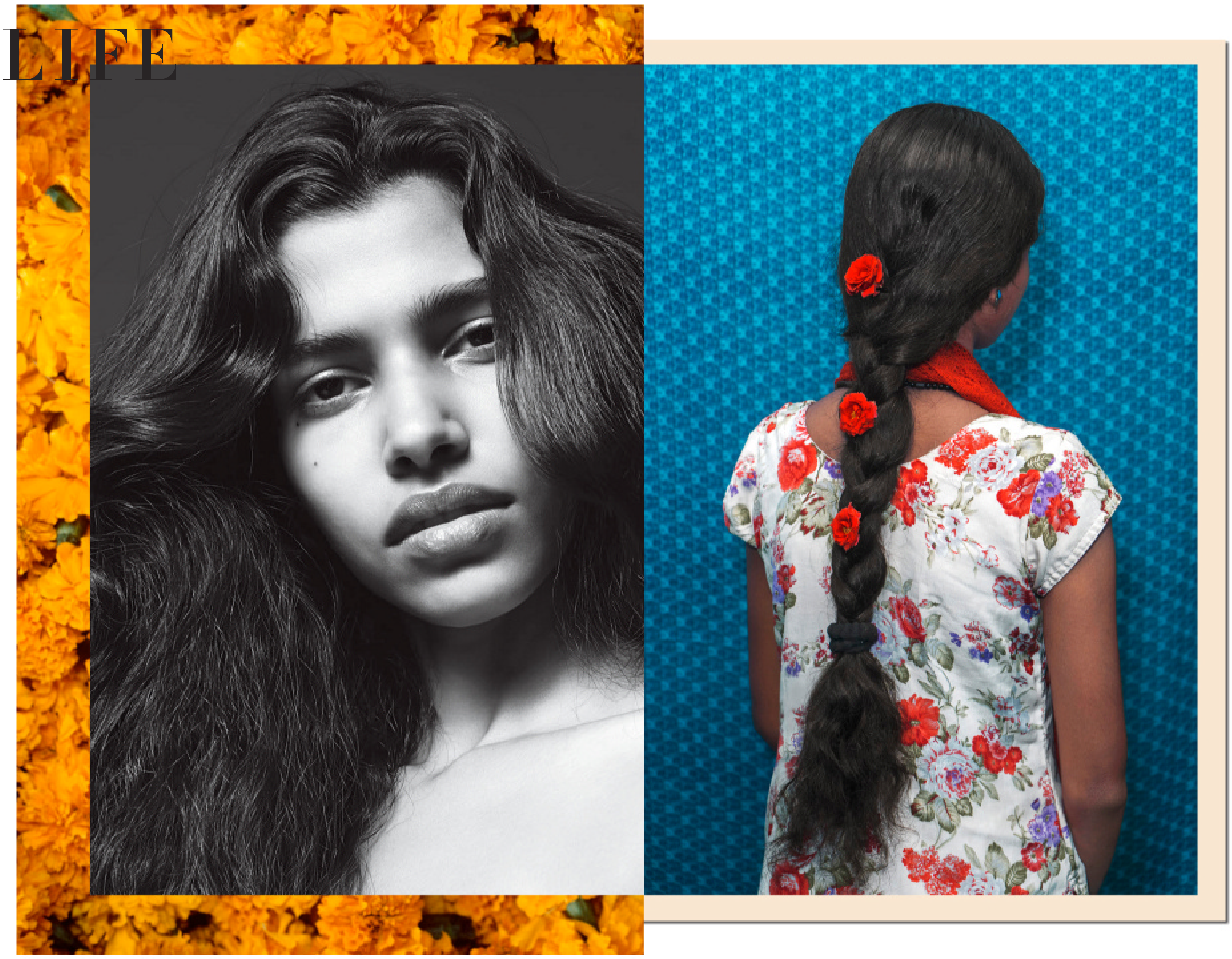
A cult-favorite skin salve gets inked.

SKIN CARE More commonly known to his fans as Winter Stone, Los Angeles–based tattoo guru Daniel Winter has become Hollywood's go-to for jewelry-like body art, including the spine-length rose Lady Gaga commissioned to immortalize her Academy Award–winning turn in *A Star Is Born*. These "delicately sharp" masterpieces come easily to the 38-year-old; but properly preserving his work is less of a sure bet. "Tattoos are a surface wound," Winter explains, making it tricky to find an ideal post-care product that has clean ingredients and walks the line between keeping a new design moist and oversaturated. But an Instagram discovery last spring changed all that. "It really livens up the skin," he confirms of Restore Healing Balm, a three-ingredient wonder salve that the Seattle-based dermatologist Heather Rogers, M.D., developed for post-procedure patients in 2015, before it became an insider favorite. After many DMs and a huge amount of interest from his roughly 500K followers, Winter and Rogers have teamed up on an exclusive edition of the product, out this month, printed with a drawing of one of Winter's signature roses. Featuring castor oil, castor wax, and glycerin, and with no trace of petroleum jelly, a common ingredient that Rogers says "can actually change the color of a tattoo," the cure-all works particularly well on fresh ink, not to mention cuts, burns, dry skin—and sore nipples, she adds; the food-grade formula is also gaining traction as a stealth savior among breastfeeding mothers.—JENNA RENNERT



TRAVEL: COURTESY OF NAYARA SPRINGS. TATTOOS: COURTESY OF WINTERSTONE. DAISY: STEVE CAVALIER/ ALAMY STOCK PHOTO. GINGKO: JOHN GRANT/GETTY IMAGES. STILL LIFE: JOESPHINE SCHIELE.


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Oil Change

A new hair-care brand is bringing a traditional Indian beauty ritual to the mainstream.

HAIR There is an Indian *Panchatantra*—an ancient fable—that tells the story of the tigers and the trees, who must learn to help one another in order to thrive in nature. When Nikita Mehta and her brother Akash were growing up in London, their grandmother would pay frequent visits from India, regaling them with these folktales while she massaged their scalps with oils. "She told us her own versions," says Nikita, 28—and she came up with her own formulas as well, combining ingredients such as circulation-boosting castor oil, anti-inflammatory ashwagandha, and antiseptic turmeric into a coconut-oil base that lent their hair a healthy luster.

"It was a moment of peace," recalls Nikita, who was in need of similar respite a few years ago when her hair started falling out from stress. "I went back to the kitchen, mixing the oils that my grandmother used." After a month, her hair was thicker, smoother.

"For Indians, hair oiling is just part of life," explains Akash, 26, who left his role in influencer marketing at Parfums Christian Dior to team up with Nikita on Fable & Mane, a hair-care line based around this traditional approach to maintenance that launches this spring at Sephora. Its debut collection, select proceeds from which will go toward tiger conservation in India, includes a coconut-and-ashwagandha shampoo, a turmeric-based conditioner, and a whipped–coconut cream mask: All of the products are vegan, silicone- and cruelty-free, and come in refillable packaging printed with lyrical stories—a tribute to their grandmother. But the lightweight oil—a prewash treatment with a complex of Ayurvedic plants—has the most potential to become a cross-cultural hit as Ayurvedic healing gains traction in the modern wellness movement. "It's roots for roots," says Nikita with a flip of her thick, glossy strands.

"Torched to death" is a better description of my own hair, so I have high hopes for the ritual—**or any ritual that will make my utilitarian beauty** routine more meaningful. Warming the oil between my hands, I rub it into my crown (the chakra that stimulates higher consciousness in yogic teachings), moving in small circles toward my temples and the nape of my neck until my hair is coated. In India, women go out with slick heads to let the treatment penetrate for as long as possible, Nikita explains. But in Los Angeles, I stay inside and watch half an episode of *The Crown* instead. After I shower, my hair is noticeably shinier—and I made a dent in my Netflix queue. Self-care, simplified.—MOLLY CREEDEN



SMOOTH MOVE
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: INDIAN-BORN MODEL POOJA MOR'S ENVIABLE STRANDS. A SLEEK BRAID, DOTTED WITH MARIGOLDS. AS A PREWASH RITUAL, THE OIL PROMOTES GROWTH, SHINE—AND TAKING A FEW MINUTES FOR YOURSELF.

TOP LEFT: AMY TROOST/TRUNK ARCHIVE. POOJA MOR AT ELITE NEW YORK; MARIGOLDS: SHALINI SARAN/INDIAPICTURES/UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP/GETTY IMAGES. TOP RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPHED BY SOHRAB HURA OF MAGNUM PHOTOS. BOTTOM: COURTESY OF FABLE & MANE.


POLO
RALPH LAUREN
The Earth Polo
MADE FROM PLASTIC BOTTLES – WITH THE PLEDGE TO USE 170 MILLION RECYCLED PLASTIC BOTTLES IN OUR PRODUCTS AND PACKAGING BY 2025. ONE OF MANY STEPS WE ARE TAKING TO REDUCE OUR IMPACT.








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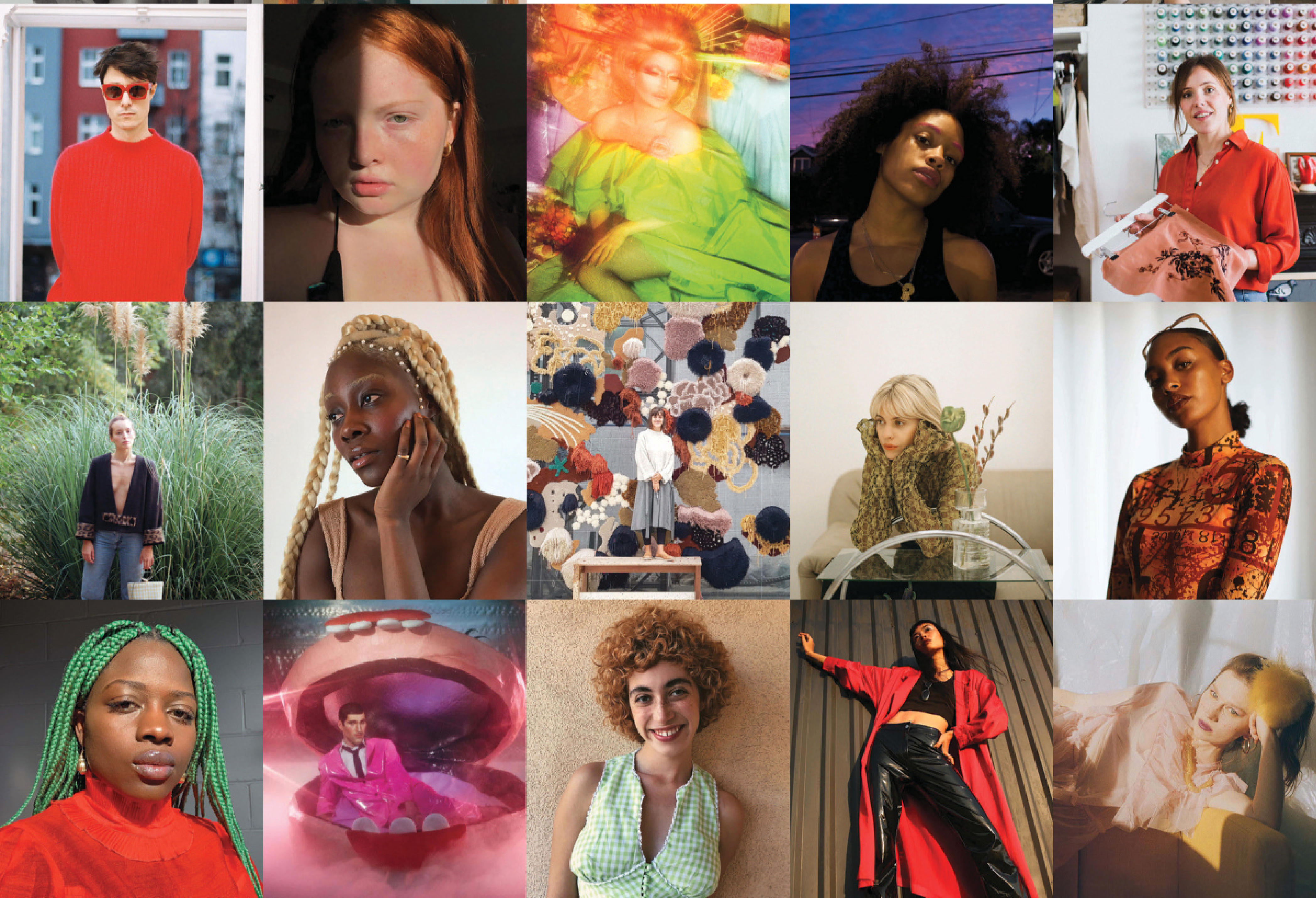


vogueworld

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January 2020

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CREA

PRODUCED BY HONOR HELLON; PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE SKY ROOM AT NEW MUSEUM.



AT
IVITY

Alexander McQueen

What makes Sarah Burton's Alexander McQueen such a bastion of creativity? It begins with her vast web of influences, most with origins in the United Kingdom—the flora in Kew's Royal Botanic Gardens; the West Dorset–born paleontologist Mary Anning; shabby old English country houses—and ends with her tailoring, which flits from militaristic rigor to breathless romanticism. Models Ugbad Abdi, Indira Scott, and Abby Champion all wear Alexander McQueen. Hair, Mustafa Yanaz; makeup, Romy Soleimani. Fashion Editor: Jorden Bickham.

Photographed by Stefan Ruiz

INDIV



Balenciaga

Since his appointment as artistic director of Balenciaga in 2015, Demna Gvasalia hasn't chafed against the house's storied archives so much as exploded them, with multiplicity—of silhouettes, proportions, and textures in the clothes and age, ethnicity, and size among models—a priority. "We cast in a new way, with different aesthetic views," Gvasalia says. What he wants, in the end, are individuals. "Each [model] does something; each of them has the presence I'm always looking for; each of them has their own way of wearing clothes." Models Marius Courcoul, Nadja Auermann, Sarah Batt, Tanya Katysheva, and Eliza Douglas all wear Balenciaga. Hair, Simone Mason; makeup, Miranda Joyce.

Fashion Editor: Camilla Nickerson.

Photographed by Nigel Shafran

ALITY

PRODUCED BY FARAGO PROJECTS

VIDUA





Marine Serre and Atlein

For young French designers Marine Serre and Atlein's Antonin Tron, to build a sustainable business means more than using responsibly sourced materials (although that's certainly important, too). Also at hand is the challenge of giving their clothing lasting presence—of fighting disposability in truly every way. "I believe in a radical change in our economic system to save our world," Tron says. "I think our generation has the opportunity to change things." Model Imaan Hammam wears Atlein. Models Adut Akech and Carolyn Murphy both wear Marine Serre. Hair, Esther Langham; makeup, Petros Petrohilos. Fashion Editor: Tonne Goodman.

Photographed by Daniel Jackson

PRODUCED BY WILLIAM GALUSHA; SPECIAL THANKS TO LMCC'S ARTS CENTER AT GOVERNORS ISLAND AND MICHAEL WANG: "EXTINCT IN NEW YORK," ORGANIZED BY SWISS INSTITUTE.



Gucci

Alessandro Michele's Gucci has long played fast and loose with the concept of gendered dressing, splicing the codes of traditional menswear with frill and flounce galore. Possessed of an aesthetic sensibility at once cinematic and antiquarian, Michele advances a vision of fashion and style that leaves plenty of room for everybody—including misfits. Model Hyunji Shin wears Gucci.

Fashion Editor: Jorden Bickham.

Photographed by Stefan Ruiz



INCLUS

Telfar

The brainchild of Liberian-American designer Telfar Clemens, Telfar privileges inclusion. In *The World Isn't Everything,* the short film that accompanied his spring 2020 collection, Clemens considered security procedures at airports around the world, and how those checkpoints can be used to objectify and oppress. Telfar, needless to say, does the very opposite; as the unisex label proudly proclaims, it's "not for you—it's for everyone." Model Aheem Sosa wears Telfar.



SIXTY



Maison Margiela

Long a kind of standard-bearer for the fashion avant-garde, Maison Margiela's designs favor the cleverly off-kilter—mixed-and-matched proportions, exposed stitching, an odd sleeve—as much now, under John Galliano, as they did under Martin Margiela himself. Model Paloma Elsesser wears Maison Margiela.

PRODUCED BY HONOR HELLON



Gucci

Subtle slicks of gold lend a Gucci blazer—resplendent in peachy pink—the sort of high/low, masculine/feminine quality that's become the house's signature. "I'm afraid of getting bored," Alessandro Michele said recently. "I always have to try something new." Model Indira Scott wears Gucci. On this and preceding spread: hair, Mustafa Yanaz; makeup, Romy Soleimani.



TIME LESS



NESS

Celine

The "new" Celine, much like the label under Phoebe Philo, is a meditation on simple pleasures that will last. Since his installment at the house in 2018, Hedi Slimane has made Celine's fundamental Frenchness his North Star: "I needed to reroot the house of Celine from within," he says. "Its Parisian essence. I was born and raised in Paris, and there is no ambiguity as to where this historical French house, which was always around as I was growing up, stands for culturally. I am rebuilding the semantics sign by sign, season after season. It is really about foundations and consistency." Models Selena Forrest and Olivia Vinten both wear Celine by Hedi Slimane. Hair, Mustafa Yanaz; makeup, Petros Petrohilos. Fashion Editor: Tonne Goodman.

Photographed by Daniel Jackson

PRODUCED BY WILLIAM GALUSHA. SPECIAL THANKS TO SALON 94 AND GAETANO PESCE.

Erdem, Pyer Moss, Molly Goddard, Simone Rocha, and Rokh

With their respective Turkish-British, Haitian-American, English, Chinese-Irish, and Korean backgrounds, several of the industry's most independent voices are changing how we talk about representation in fashion. At Erdem, Pyer Moss, Molly Goddard, Simone Rocha, and Rokh, collections reflecting the designers' very specific points of view only help to enrich the greater design landscape. Abdi wears Erdem. Model Adesuwa Aighewi wears Pyer Moss. Model Sara Grace Wallerstedt wears Molly Goddard. Model Jill Kortleve wears Simone Rocha. Model Vilma Sjöberg wears Rokh. Hair, Tamas Tuzes; makeup, Francelle Daly.

Fashion Editor: Alex Harrington.

Photographed by Sharon Lockhart



INDE
ENCE



PRODUCED BY PONY PROJECTS; PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE PHILIP JOHNSON GLASS HOUSE.



PRODUCED BY WILLIAM GALUSHA; SPECIAL THANKS TO SALON 94 AND GAETANO PESCE.



LABO
TION

Dries Van Noten

Dries Van Noten's spring collection—a surprise collaboration with the designer Christian Lacroix—represented some of the best that fashion has to offer: euphoric beauty, honest-to-goodness wearability, and a merging of extraordinary (and extraordinarily different) points of view. "It was a very open process," Van Noten says. "We appreciated each other's creativity." Models Ellen Rosa, Vinten, Forrest, Eniola Abioro, and Cara Taylor all wear Dries Van Noten. Hair, Mustafa Yanaz; makeup, Petros Petrohilos. Details, see In This Issue.

Fashion Editor: Tonne Goodman.

Photographed by Daniel Jackson



Earth Mother

For Stella McCartney, sustainability isn't a buzzword, an aspiration, or an abstract concept. It's a way of life—and a focal point of her ever-expanding business.

By Hamish Bowles.
Photograph by Annie Leibovitz.



FIELD DAY
McCartney with her children (FROM FAR LEFT), Miller, Bailey, Beckett, and Reiley, in Gloucestershire. All wearing Stella McCartney. Hair, George Northwood; makeup, Kirstin Piggott. Fashion Editor: Tonne Goodman.

I'm so off my tits on coffee," Stella McCartney admits, knocking back yet another cup in the foyer of a boutique hotel a stone's throw from her home in London's Notting Hill. "I had four school drop-offs this morning," she explains. "I start at 6:30 a.m., and by the time I get to work [by bicycle], I feel like I'm literally done for the day. I'm a big hot sweaty mess, too," she adds, having decided that a thick organic-cotton flying suit (no pesticides used in its production) was the way to dress for a Monday morning that started grimly overcast but soon turned sultry. "It's just so difficult being in fashion, isn't it?" McCartney sighs. "We have to pretend to be so perfect. I'm the one that comes in with a punk-rock kind of 'fuck this perfection,' " says the woman who famously turned up, with Liv Tyler, to the Costume Institute's 1999 "Rock Style" exhibition, both wearing jeans and custom T-shirts spelling out ROCK ROYALTY. "It's not maintainable, it's not wise, and it's very old-fashioned. So there you go."

McCartney does the school run five days a week with daughters Bailey, 13, and Reiley, 9, and sons Miller, 14, and Beckett, 11. "When you've got a job and you've got kids," she says, "it's when you get to see them, and you have to wake up super early and engage in that moment. Then I try and squeeze in some exercise, and then I go to work. And I try and get back for the book-ending of being a mum."

> "I was always a bit of a freak in the house of fashion," she says. "My culture has been different from day one"

On weekends, McCartney spends more time with the family when they decamp to an estate in the wilds of unfashionable north Gloucestershire, the result of a house hunt born, as McCartney has explained, of "a desperate mission to find land so that I could ride my horse."

McCartney married the dashing and protective Alasdhair Willis—the former publisher of *Wallpaper* and a creative guru himself—in the fall of 2003, and their aligned aesthetic passions run the gamut from the innovative indoor-outdoor architecture of the midcentury Sri Lankan architect Sir Geoffrey Bawa to old English roses. Over the past 15 years, the couple have transformed their handsome but once desolate Georgian manor house, sitting in bleak open farmland, into "a redbrick box within a garden within a garden within a garden," as McCartney describes it, a breathtaking landscape of grand walled enclosures and allées of trees reflecting both her belief that "being out in a beautiful garden is nicer than sitting in a beautiful room" and her husband's passion for such stately English flowering landscapes as Hidcote and Sissinghurst. "We planted a million trees," McCartney told *Vogue* in 2010, "made another Eden."

"You know what I was doing this weekend?" asks McCartney. "I was riding my horse barefoot and bareback, with my daughter [Reiley]. It was about as good as it gets."

On a visit there in 2010 I was intrigued to discover—among the bridle paths, wild meadows, orchards, and Downton-scaled rose gardens and herbaceous borders—a series of reed-filled ponds that turned out to be the McCartney-Willises' off-the-grid sewage system. "See?" says McCartney with her impish laugh. "Being an environmentalist can be sexy!"

McCartney has been environmentally conscious since childhood. "I was privileged," she has admitted. "I grew up on an organic farm; I saw the seasons. My parents were vegetarians—they were change agents." (That childhood idyll is evoked in her late mother, Linda McCartney's, book *The Polaroid Diaries,* which also captures the world of McCartney's American relatives, including her Eastman grandfather, who lunched at the exclusive Maidstone Club and hung de Koonings and Rothkos in his Billy Baldwin–decorated Fifth Avenue drawing room, where the infant McCartney amused herself with Joseph Cornell's magical shadow boxes, alluringly placed on a child's-height shelf.)

The great outdoors is also reflected in McCartney's state-of-the-sustainable-arts London flagship store—which she designed herself, with a soundtrack that includes a three-hour loop of her father, Paul's, demo tapes along with a Bob Roth meditation in the changing rooms. "The audio is important for me," she says as she proudly walks me round it, "because it's obviously such a big part of my upbringing." There are papier-mâché walls made from "all of the shredded paper from the office," along with a silver birch grove and a moss-covered rockery of giant granite rocks brought from the 1,100-acre McCartney family farm on Scotland's Mull of Kintyre. "My personality is this sort of contrast between the hard and the soft, the masculine and feminine," says McCartney. "I wanted to have life in the store—to bring nature into the experience of shopping," she explains as she takes me up in the Stellevator to the floor where she fitted the Duchess of Sussex for the glamorous halter-neck dress she wore for the wedding reception following her marriage to Prince Harry. There are also pieces from McCartney's "All Together Now" Beatles collaboration, inspired by a friends-and-family screening of *Yellow Submarine* that her father staged on the film's 50th anniversary. "It just blew my brains because I hadn't seen it since I was a kid," she recalls. "It's astonishing—just mental and so trippy and so childlike and so innocent and so heavy and so meaningful."

Since McCartney's 1995 Central Saint Martins graduation show, her brand has been defined by the urgent desire to do away with animal cruelty in the fashion industry. And while, 20 years ago, there *were* fake furs on the market, the only glues available were animal-based. "I imagine Vikings sitting around a pot, boiling down the last bones of the elk that they skinned for the fur," says McCartney. "And I think, Wow—we're still there." Today McCartney uses renewable energy where it's available for both her stores and offices; the eyewear she shows me in her store is bi-acetate, and her sneakers are made with biodegradable Loop technology; she uses regenerated nylon, polyester, and cashmere but also works with producers making innovative fashion fibers—building fake fur from sustainable corn fiber, for instance, producing vegan microsilk, and growing mycelium-based "leather."

"I was always a bit of a freak in the house of fashion," McCartney says. "My regime, my culture, has been different from day one." In Paris, where she was appointed creative director of Chloé in 1997, she struggled with the perception that at 26 she was too young and unqualified for the job ("The Beatles wrote *Sgt. Pepper* when they were 26," she told *Vogue* tartly), and her working practice was "totally at odds with the rest of the industry," as she recalls. Even now, she says, "every single day in our office is this sort of daily challenge—a way of trying to perfect and persist and find realistic solutions within the luxury-fashion sector—and even in a more broadstream way with the collaborations with Adidas [initiated in 2004]. Each day," she says, "there are questions that I ask that we try to find an answer for. And if we can't, we'll try again tomorrow."

Despite what she refers to as "a lot of resistance," McCartney turned the Chloé gig (which lasted through the launch of her self-titled brand in 2001) into a triumph, tripling sales. Today, as we march inexorably to global Armageddon, her commitment to cruelty-free fashion and sustainability is fast becoming the industry norm. In recent years, for instance, luxury brands including Gucci, Prada, Michael Kors, Armani, and Chanel have declared themselves fur-free. "I'm hugely relieved," says McCartney, "but I'm actually astounded that it's taken so long."

McCartney now gives scholarships at Central Saint Martins, her alma mater, for students who "adhere to our ethical charter," and helps young designers navigate the complicated terrain of sustainability. "We're in the farming industry in fashion," she says. "We look at the biodiversity and the soil. It's crazy. It's basically exhausting. It's much easier not to do it. So I kind of understand why the world hasn't quite followed."

"Each day there are questions that I ask that we try to find an answer for. And if we can't, we'll try again tomorrow"

But McCartney has far more ambitious goals for expanding her global industry reach. Last year, she bought back full ownership of her label from Kering, 17 years after the group's then–creative director Tom Ford had urged the company to invest in McCartney's fledgling brand. Following her move, "people began to show an interest quite quickly," as McCartney recalls. "I was fortunate enough that Mr. Arnault was one of the people." She's speaking, of course, of Bernard Arnault, the all-powerful chairman and chief executive of LVMH, which acquired a minority share in Stella McCartney in July. "I think it's incredibly exciting. It sends a big, big message to the industry if Mr. Arnault is asking me to be his personal adviser on sustainability at LVMH. I think that was one of the attractions for me—it is a big, timely statement, and hopefully game-changing for all of us."

McCartney points out that the fashion brands with the biggest environmental impact in terms of scale are "the high-end luxury houses, and then the fast-fashion sector. They have massive impact in a negative way, and they can have a massive impact in a positive way." These fast-fashion retailers, as she observes, turned from fur far earlier than luxury brands. "They're more in touch with the youth," she says, "and what the next generation of consumers actually wants. It's a given for my children," she notes, "that you have to show some kind of mindfulness or awareness." (In recognition of the next generation's activists, McCartney has launched the Stella McCartney Today for Tomorrow Award—video nominations via Instagram—"to celebrate," as she says, "a new generation of change agents and eco-warriors under 25 who are kicking ass for Mother Earth.")

She may have her work cut out for her. A week after our coffee klatch and four days before presenting her spring-summer 2020 show in Paris ("our most sustainable collection ever"), Arnault, addressing an LVMH sustainability event in Paris, called out 16-year-old activist Greta Thunberg for "indulging in an absolute catastrophism about the evolution of the world" in her electrifying appearance at the United Nations summit on climate change. "I find it demoralizing," he added. It was perhaps no accident that McCartney raced to put together a sustainability panel (no questions, no photographs) of her own on the eve of her show at the Opéra Garnier—a panel that included Extinction Rebellion activist Clare Farrell, the legendary environmentalist and activist Yann Arthus-Bertrand, and author Dana Thomas (*Fashionopolis: The Price of Fast Fashion and the Future of Clothes*), who noted that "we wear our clothes seven times on average before throwing them away . . . we're perpetuating this bulimia of buying, using, and throwing away."

"What we've seen over the last few weeks and months," McCartney said, pointedly, "is children and young people taking action." The designer also addressed the issue of young activists' rejecting the idea of consumerism. "If the youth of today stop buying into it," McCartney added, "then obviously, the people at the top have got to deliver on that."

Rayon, or viscose, an indispensable fashion fiber, for instance, is created from wood pulp. "This year alone," McCartney says, "up to 150 million trees have been cut down just for viscose." McCartney now sources hers from sustainable forests in Sweden. "I'm trying to create something that's still sexy and desirable and luxurious that isn't landfill," she tells me. "Every single second, fast fashion is landfill."

Does McCartney feel that she's had an impact on the practices of other brands? "That's not for me to say," she demurs. "That would be so unchic of us. But we *are* a kind of incubator. I have sympathy for how hard it is to shift the massive *Titanic* ship away from the iceberg," she says. "We're a little agile sailboat, and we built the ship. And I think that's easier than changing something that's been going in one direction for so long."

While she was at Kering, the company developed an environmental profit-and-loss tool that assigned a monetary value to environmental impact—something that led to McCartney's decision (to give just one example) to stop the use of virgin cashmere, CONTINUED ON PAGE 98



SPECIAL DELIVERY
Ervin and Graham's son is due in January. On Graham: Brunello Cucinelli blouse. Azlee black enamel rings. Hair, Sally Hershberger; makeup, Hannah Murray. Details, see In This Issue.
Fashion Editor: Tonne Goodman.

The Shape of Things to Come

Playful, positive, and never less than completely herself, Ashley Graham has already left her mark on modeling. Now she and her husband, Justin Ervin, have another reason to celebrate.

By Jonathan Van Meter.
Photographed by Annie Leibovitz.



SET DESIGN, MARY HOWARD STUDIO; PHOTOGRAPHED AT SALUTATIONS.

It is mid-September and fall is mere moments away, but on this morning in Brooklyn it is already nearly 90 degrees, a sultry, salty breeze blowing in off New York Harbor. I arrive at DUMBO House, the members-only social club right on the East River, and step up to the lobby check-in at precisely 9 a.m. I am meeting Ashley Graham, I say to the woman at the desk, whose widening eyes are focused just past my right ear. Suddenly I sense a presence, someone standing thisclose. "*I'm right here,*" says Graham in a faux-husky voice, steaming the back of my neck. Punked, right out of the gate.

A fashion-editor friend of mine who's known Graham for years told me, "She's the opposite of hard work—she's the best girl, period," and I immediately get what she means. Graham has an uncanny knack for making you feel not just relaxed and happy but like you might actually be a better, funnier person than you think you are. Within minutes, we're cackling like eighth-graders in a sex-ed class, and it does not take long to understand why the universe seems to be tilting in her direction, everyone finally coming around to her POV, which is one of radical transparency, a kind of punk-rock commitment to being forthright about nearly everything—body positivity above all. Which is exactly why Revlon has made her a face of its brand, and why she is an ambassador for several more, including Marina Rinaldi and Swimsuits for All and Addition Elle. It is why Ellen DeGeneres chose Graham to host her digital series *Fearless with Ashley Graham,* where Graham talks to everyday folks who, as she puts it, "take a chance at something they never thought they could do." And it's also why Kim Kardashian West and Lilly Singh and Gayle King are all too happy to visit Graham's podcast, which is in its second season and which she is confident enough to have named Pretty Big Deal.

"I'm usually the life of the party. Now all anyone wants to talk to me about is being pregnant." She laughs. "It's a secret society that I didn't know about"

Graham is five months pregnant when we meet, and wearing a black chiffon dress from The Row that skims the floor. "I love this dress," she says as she turns to show it off in profile. "See? It's great for pregnant——" here she pushes her belly out as far as it will go and starts laughing. "And then look! Here's my party trick!" She sucks her pregnant belly all the way in and smooths the dress out flat. "And not pregnant!" Then: "Are you hungry?" Yes. "Oh, good. I have to eat. That's my new thing. Like, if there's no food? We don't need to stay." But wait. "Do you want to see the pool really quick? The view is kinda *maj.*" Up to the stairs we go, Graham exuberantly greeting everyone we pass: Hey, baby! Oh, hiii, sis! Standing by the pool, we take in the sweeping—in point of fact, major—view; it is the ultimate palimpsest, one that allows you to see all of the layers of New York history. In the summer, Graham tells me, she and her best friend hang out here on weekends. "You have to show up at 6 a.m. and wait in line to get a bed by the pool. So my best friend, who lives across the street, will come and wait in line for me. I show up at 7:30, and then all day we have our own bed. Instead of going to the Hamptons, which isn't our thing, we come here. Just walk across the street! This is our hood!"

But for a few months in a cramped apartment in Chelsea, Graham has been a Brooklyn girl since 2006. Indeed, she has lived at the same modest address in Park Slope since she was 17, when she signed with Wilhelmina and began modeling in earnest. Rachel, the aforementioned best friend, was the real estate agent who found her the apartment. "She's been my ride or die for 16 years," says Graham, who's now pointing out a building off in the distance where she and her husband of nine years, cinematographer and documentarian Justin Ervin, finally bought themselves a serious home: a whopping three-story loft—a dope triplex, as she might say in one of the many voices from her repertoire—that has been under renovation for many, many months. One day soon, the best view in New York City will be hers. "I've been putting away my money," she says of renting for all those years. "I mean, I wasted money or other things like clothes and . . . caviar." She laughs. "But this apartment is a really big deal for me."

We head back downstairs, find a table, and order breakfast. I notice her nails, shellacked to a fare-thee-well. "Homegrown, baby!" She holds them up for inspection. "I think this color is called High Maintenance." Her left ear is like a wind chime, dangling with so many earrings you can hear them clinking together. "Seventeen holes," she says. Suddenly her big black bag starts to vibrate, not with the zzzzt . . . zzzzt . . . zzzzt of a cell phone but the continuous low-frequency hum of, say, a vibrator. "Call me out, Jonathan!" she says, laughing as she digs in and finds the culprit: a handheld fan. Really, I say. "Oh! When you're pregnant? And it's hot? You need one of these walking around the city." And then she pulls a smaller bag out of her big bag. "I carried this last night to the Fenty show—little vintage Chanel moment. I'm giving it back to my stylist tomorrow. Don't own it!"

It's Fashion Week, and Graham walked for Tommy Hilfiger x Zendaya three nights ago. "Tommy told me I was the first pregnant woman who'd ever walked his runway. It was kind of like a block party in Harlem, all kinds of women, all genders, races, and everybody's heels were so high. It was not a normal catwalk—it was concrete, still under construction, with potholes. And I was praying I wasn't going to fall down. Which is an awful lot to ask of a model in her second trimester—I have wounds on my feet!"

Last night, she attended Serena Williams's fashion show, where she was seated with Kim Kardashian West and La La Anthony. "Kim immediately started telling me, 'Ashley, the pregnancy may be the hardest part, but the birth is the easiest.' I'm just taking in advice from everyone and not putting too much pressure on myself." She went backstage after the show. "Serena was like, 'Call me; we should talk.' "

"I text her anything that rolls off my mind," says Williams. "I was one of those people who wanted to know every ugly detail of what happens . . . *down there* . . . what happens everywhere. Like, why are my nipples so big a week

into being pregnant? This makes no sense; the baby doesn't need to eat yet. I wanted to know every single thing, and I still love talking about it. Because I feel like it's important to kind of change the narrative and be like, it's normal to feel scared, and not be one of those women who are like, 'Oh, it's so great!' Just be scared out of your mind. That's normal."

Not long ago, Graham met Amy Schumer at a party, and Schumer instinctively scooped her up and brought her into the fold. She recently gave her a tour of her nursery. "I was like, 'Come over and I'll just tell you what I have learned and what I wish I knew,' " Schumer says. "And then I was like, 'And the nicest thing I can do for you is tell you that you won't hear from me again, but you can call me anytime.' 'Cause it's *a lot*. People are so in your face when you're pregnant because they're so fucking excited for you. And you don't get it. You can't possibly get it. And then after you've had a baby you're like, 'Oh, I get it!' "

Graham was a bit startled by all the pregnant-lady love at first. "I need my alone time, but when I do go out, I'm usually the life of the party. Now all anyone wants to talk to me about is being pregnant." She laughs. "There's just this camaraderie. It's a secret society that I didn't know about. I was hiding my pregnancy for the first four months. I've always had control over my body—when everyone else wanted to dictate what it should be, I took full control over it—but I had this life inside of me saying, It's not yours anymore, it's *mine*. And you have to just succumb. And I felt like I didn't have anyone to talk to. I was gaining weight rapidly. And I felt alone. And the one piece of advice that my stylist, Jordan Foster, gave me was, Make pregnant friends. None of my friends were in *relationships,* let alone pregnant. And now I have nine pregnant friends."

"I'm a curvy woman—a big-boned, healthy, corn-fed Nebraska girl. And once I accepted that, the more confident I became, and that's when my career started to take off"

As a rule, Graham is unflappable. "Nothing much fazes me." And then she got body-snatched by hormones. She started crying in public for no reason. "This is what happened to me the other day: I was with Justin, eating an almond butter–and–jelly sandwich, and I took one bite and all of a sudden, I starting welling up. And then full-on crying! I was chewing and eating and sobbing and I was like, I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M CRYING BUT I'M REALLY UPSET THAT WE'RE NOT GOING TO BE IN THE NEW APARTMENT AND THE BABY IS GOING TO BE HERE!!!!" She lets rip with one of her full-throated, bone-rattling laughs. And then she tells another story, about their anniversary, the day they announced their pregnancy and flew to St. Barts. "We get there and I'm brushing my teeth and Justin is washing his hands, and there was something about the way he put the soap on his hands that made me hysterical with laughter. THAT'S THE FUNNIEST THING I'VE EVER SEEN!!! But it *wasn't* funny. It was my hormonal emotions. And I started laughing so hard that I went into hysterics. I said to Justin, 'If you said something to me right now that was sad, I might start crying.' And he just stared at me. And then: the tears!"

The next morning at 9:30, I meet Graham at her doula's town house in Williamsburg. Latham Thomas, a yogi who founded Mama Glow, an online hub for expectant and new mothers, is a celebrity wellness guru and birthing coach with a devoted hip-hop and fashion following. Her studio consists of two rooms on the ground floor. Painted millennial pink, the space is modern-girly in the extreme.

We hear Graham before we see her. "Smells like yogaaaa in heeeeeere. . . ." She swans into the studio in head-to-toe skintight black gear, ready to go, carrying a boxy little Dior book bag. "This just came out," she says, "but only in Japan. Isn't it cuuuuuute?" And then, rubbing her belly: "I think my stomach got bigger this morning."

"This very morning?" says Thomas.

"Like another inch!" Yesterday Graham interviewed Cindy Eckert, the cofounder of the company that developed Addyi, the female Viagra, for her podcast, which is also filmed for Graham's YouTube channel and is obviously where her heart lies these days. "The ultimate goal is to have my own television show," Graham says. "My crew is all women, except for one nonbinary person. And we were all on the edge of our seats because Cindy was talking about sex, drugs, and making billions of dollars!" (I sat in on Ashley's interview with Gayle King, and she not only coaxed King into talking candidly about her late-bloomer career and being single at 64, but also somehow got her cackling gleefully over ribald sex talk, admitting that she posed naked for a photographer in college, and debating the pros and cons of sending revealing selfies.) Graham thinks of Pretty Big Deal as conversations with women she is inspired by and wants to learn from—and she is a sponge, a pupil. "With Viagra, it's a blood-flow issue, but for women, when you have no sex drive, it's all in your head. So this drug turns on sexual fantasy. It's not like it does anything here. . . ." she grabs her crotch. "For women it's all like, we have a checklist: taking care of kids, worried about our husband, worried about our body. But the drug flips that and makes you want to have sex."

The three of us get to joking about how this may explain everything: For men it's purely physiological; for women—can you please get my shopping list out of my head? For someone who brings up God and her faith regularly and goes to church most Sundays—who, indeed, met her husband in church—Graham is remarkably sex-positive. She talks about it all the time—though somehow, there's nothing remotely provocative about it. She manages to be uncommonly frank about, say, bodily functions and still maintain a sense of decorum, even as she pulls up her dress to show me her brand-new SKIMS, or asks to see the scabs all up and down my arms from the poison-ivy outbreak I had a week prior. When I finally roll up my sleeve to show her, she lets out CONTINUED ON PAGE 98



No Limits

Motherhood, a new album, the scrutiny of ever-escalating fame. How does Cardi B handle the pressure? Without apologies: "It's hard for me to be soft, period," she tells Rob Haskell (among other things). Photographed by Annie Leibovitz.



VIEW FROM THE TOP
"I wonder if people are gonna relate to the new shit that I gotta talk about now." Zac Posen dress. Tiffany & Co. earring and ring. Jimmy Choo shoes.
Fashion Editor: Tonne Goodman.

Although Cardi B could never be accused of mincing words, it's hard to imagine a Twitter rant as frank on the subject of fame and its discontents as her video for "Press," the tense, defiant track she released in the spring of this year. In it, a steamy ménage à trois culminates in a gunshot, which in turn gives way to a defiantly glamorous perp walk, a police interrogation complicated by very high heels, a trial that ends in a bloodbath, and, for good measure, a prison-cell toilet-bowl drowning. "Press, press, press, press, press / Cardi don't need more press," she raps over a frantic beat. "Walk in, bulletproof vest. . . . Murder scene, Cardi made a mess." She's the antihero of this ambivalent revenge fantasy; as the bodies pile up, her tearful fans begin to look foolish, and the haters—the press, presumably?—are proven right.

The video was released a day after Cardi B pleaded not guilty to charges emanating from a brawl at the Angels NYC gentlemen's club in Queens the previous August. If there was a point to the timing, perhaps it was to assert that Cardi was already on trial. "I thought 'Press' was fun and it was gangsta, and then because it didn't perform as good as my other songs, people was like, Oh, she's a flop; oh, she's dying out," she explains. "This whole year has just been a lot for me. I feel like people are just so tired of me winning. I will look for my name on Twitter, and it's like hate tweets, hate tweets, hate tweets."

It's the middle of an early-autumn afternoon, and Cardi is stretched out on the green modular sofa in the living room of her grandmother's apartment in Washington Heights. She has just woken up, having come home at close to 3 a.m. after shooting a video with the rapper Fat Joe for his track "Yes," on which she guests. The song is a paean to a certain rough New York—perhaps the Bronx, where both Fat Joe and Cardi grew up—fueled by violence and greed. ("My palm and my trigger finger itch, bitch," Cardi raps.) She is wearing nothing but an oversize white T-shirt and underpants, a reprieve from the daily slog of hair and nails and zippers and heels. A giant peacock tattoo stretches over her buttock and down around her thigh. Lately her style has hewed toward the quiet and refined. She loves suits, in part because she loves the idea of surprising people by wearing suits. But for the video, she wanted to deliver early-aughts J. Lo vibes: white fur coat, white fur Tarzan miniskirt, white bikini top. A white Yankees cap was rejected, since she is a Red Sox fan. ("The underdog thing," she explains.) Only her long, silver Targaryen wig remains from last night's costuming.

Cardi was born at NewYork-Presbyterian, not far from this walkup whose hallways are saturated with the warm smells of Dominican cooking. Her father's mother has lived here for 34 years, and it's the longtime family gathering place. She has 10 aunts and uncles on her father's side alone, and 36 cousins, and she can remember so many nights when these narrow floors were crowded with sleeping bodies. Neighbors in the building, who have known her since she was a baby, barely seem to register her fame. The clamor itself feels protective: Her own apartment, in New Jersey, is spacious and quiet, an incubator for worry. "When I'm there by myself, a lot of thoughts go to my head, and when the thoughts go to my head, it just overwhelms me, and it puts me down, and it puts me on social media, and that drives me insane. So I just like to be where there's a lot of people so I won't be watching my phone." At this point her 16-month-old daughter, Kulture, grinning widely, walks through after her bath, accompanied by Cardi's aunt and her niece. Cardi squeals and gives her baby a hug, and the trio disappear behind a curtain that divides the living room from the sleeping areas. "Being a mom—how can I say it? Things are a little bit harder to balance, but it's good for the mental. Like, if I'm playing with my daughter, I forget about the issues."

> "Being a mom—how can I say it? Things are a little bit harder to balance, but it's good for the mental"

Perhaps the central question dogging Cardi at the moment is how to sustain the breathtaking momentum that carried her from stripper to social-media phenom to reality-television star to world-beating rapper in less than five years. "Bodak Yellow," her breakout single from 2017, became the first number-one hit by a solo female rapper in nearly two decades, since Lauryn Hill's "Doo Wop (That Thing)" in 1998. Cardi's subsequent debut studio collection, *Invasion of Privacy,* was critically hailed and landed her a Grammy for best rap album, another first by a solo female rap artist. Musically, her gifts were as convincing as they were unexpected. Given the ribald humor, truth bombs, and instant aphorisms of her Instagram videos—in which she brought unstinting candor, a Spanish-inflected Bronx accent, and mutinous grammar to whatever topic struck her fancy (love, sex, cheating, and money, mainly)—perhaps it should have been obvious that she'd be a quick study at writing and rapping. "What makes Cardi unique is her voice," says Bruno Mars, with whom she has collaborated on a pair of hit singles. "She was blessed with a distinct, memorable speaking voice and a tone that can set a party off. Her voice on a record is explosive."

Cardi is hard at work on a second album, scheduled for release early next year, and the pressure weighs heavily. "The first time it was just me being myself," she says. "I didn't even care if people was gonna like it or not. When I found out I did so good, I'm like, is this a big number? Everybody was like, yes, this is a huge number. So it's scary because it's like, now you got to top your first album, and then it's like, damn. I wonder if people are gonna relate to the new things, to the new life, to the new shit that I gotta talk about now. Music is changing. I feel like people just wanna hear twerk-twerk music, but it's like, is that just a phase? I probably need a sexy song. I need a lot of turn-up songs. I need a slow song, a personal song. And those are harder for me—I always need help when it comes to talking about my feelings. It's hard for me to be soft, period. So it's a lot of thoughts, a lot of pressure. It's really like a job."

Julie Greenwald, the chairman and COO of Atlantic Records, agrees that when a debut album achieves rare multi-multi-platinum success, the bar gets set high. "It's not the typical artist rollout, where the second or third is



MOTHER'S DAY
Cardi and her husband Offset's daughter, Kulture, was born inJuly of 2018. Oscar de la Renta dress. Tiffany & Co. bracelet. On Kulture: Brock Collection x Maisonette dress.

where you run all the bases," she says. "Cardi hit an out-of-the-park home run on her first album, and she knows there will be a lot of people waiting for the next one with their arms crossed. But she is incredibly driven. With the first album, that year, she did everything we asked her to do—every radio visit, every television show, every press interview. Nothing was given. I think people respond to her because they know she's not singing about something she isn't. She's going to keeping putting herself and her experiences in her music. Now that will include motherhood, her travels, her struggle to maintain her identity as a girl from the Bronx while living this fantastic life. She will show you all the shit that's involved in being famous."

There are other pressures, too. Cardi is now 27, a mother, and a wife, which makes not giving a fuck harder to pull off. And although it was her refusal to self-censor that endeared her to audiences in that first flush of celebrity, she now finds the facts of her life distorted or submitted for judgment. It has often been painful. "Social media really made me," she says. "Before I got on *Love & Hip Hop,* I had millions of followers just off the way I speak. Just me talking. And that's how I got discovered. But now social media makes everything hard." She has seen her marriage to Offset, the Atlanta rapper and member of the group Migos, placed under a microscope. The couple broke off their relationship in December 2018 but reunited early this year.

"When me and my husband got into our issues—you know, he cheated and everything—and I decided to stay with him and work together with him, a lot of people were so mad at me; a lot of women felt disappointed in me," Cardi explains. "But it's real-life shit. If you love somebody and you stop being with them, and you're depressed and social media is telling you not to talk to that person because he cheated, you're not really happy on the inside until you have the conversation. Then, if you get back with them, it's like, how could you? You let all of us down. People that be in marriages for years, when they say till death do us part, they not talking about little arguments like if you leave the fridge open. That's including everything. When I was pregnant with Kulture, a lot of people was like, oh, he has three kids already; why would you have a kid with

somebody that have three kids? And it's like, how is that such a bad thing? My dad has eight kids, and we all get along, and it feels better, fuller. And with Offset, I feel like his kids just bring a pop of fun to life when they're in his house. I actually love it. It brings out a different side of him that I like to see, and I love to see my baby interacting with her siblings. The more the merrier."

Cardi and Offset are still figuring out how to settle into family life together. They are rarely in the same city for more than a night or two at a stretch, and while she is shopping for a dream home, they don't necessarily agree on where it should be. She is most comfortable in or near New York, but Offset has never wanted to live there. "It's not an easy thing," he says. "We both have our own households. But you grow. We're way better now with communication. She's balancing a lot. She feels like she can't be absent a lot, and our jobs are crazy. But I think motherhood got her more focused. I always tell her, don't follow the comments. But she's been outspoken on things since before she was making music—she's not ever putting on, she's not ever being cool. At the end of the day, she's still going to rap about the same shit, which is what it's like being a woman."

"My thing is, everybody on social media acts like relationships is perfect," Cardi says. "And that's crazy to me. I'm around so many women, and there's always a woman talking about how she loves her man, but her man is not financially stable, or she has a problem with his mom, or the sex is not as good anymore. Everybody has issues. I believe in forgiveness. I prayed on it. Me and my husband, we prayed on it. We had priests come to us. And we just came to an understanding like, bro, it's really us against the world. He has my back for everything, I have his back for everything, so when you cheat, you're betraying the person that has your back the most. Why would you do that? We have come to a clear understanding. For me, monogamy is the only way. I'll beat your ass if you cheat on me."

Cardi, who was born Belcalis Almánzar, has famously described herself as a "regula degula schmegula girl from the Bronx." Her father is Dominican, and her mother is from Trinidad. She was a class clown who always dreamed of being a famous rapper. "I don't know what it is—I will never know what it is—but ever since I was young, people liked to hear me talk," she says. "I was always that person, like, I didn't really have a lot of friends, but people was excited to see me in class because they knew I was funny. They was dying to hear a story from me. But the streets distracted me from my dream, you know what I'm saying? It's like, oh, I could've been in a vocal class after school, but I'd rather just go hang out with my friends and smoke weed and be around gangs and be with this guy. That type of shit distracted me. And being an artist was just so far-fetched."

When she was a teenager, people started to call her Bacardi, mainly to match her younger sister, Hennessy, who had been named for the cognac. (It wasn't until she was 22 that she became Cardi B, after Instagram kept shutting down her account for use of a copyrighted name.) At 16 she joined the Bloods. Although she attended a performing-arts high school, CONTINUED ON PAGE 99





CLEAR AS GLASS
Zac Posen dress. In this story: hair, Tokyo Stylez; makeup, Hannah Murray. Details, see In This Issue.

SET DESIGN, MARY HOWARD STUDIO; PHOTOGRAPHED AT SALUTATIONS AND 56 LEONARD.

Labor of Love

Her hotly awaited adaptation of *Little Women* is just one new arrival for Greta Gerwig this year. She talks to Chloe Malle about her twin adventures: filmmaking and motherhood.

Photographed by Annie Leibovitz.



HEAVENLY BODIES
Gerwig's son with partner and fellow filmmaker Noah Baumbach was born in March. Gerwig wears a Valentino dress.
Fashion Editor: Tonne Goodman.



Greta Gerwig is standing in the ground-floor apartment of a town house in the West Village, and her attention is split. The house belongs to the mother of her partner, the filmmaker Noah Baumbach, and is a space she and Baumbach use as an editing studio (a plush fox mask Baumbach used in *The Meyerowitz Stories (New and Selected)* surveils from a corner). On one of the desktop monitors is a freeze-frame from *Little Women,* Gerwig's new film, due on Christmas Day, in which Saoirse Ronan, who plays Louisa May Alcott's revered heroine Jo March, is mid-conversation with her sisters Amy (Florence Pugh) and Meg (Emma Watson). Gerwig is concerned about a metallic patch of sky above the tree line. "That silver—can we get rid of it?" she asks Nick Ramirez, who also helped edit Gerwig's 2017 film, *Lady Bird.* He nods, hand on mouse, as a gurgle and a very small dancing foot draw Gerwig's gaze back to the stroller at her side. Harold, Gerwig and Baumbach's six-month-old son, is supposed to be asleep, but he is not, and he would like some attention.

"It's epic personal filmmaking," says Meryl Streep. "It's very much the author's tale, and as a result it's hers"

Gerwig has just come from the nearby apartment she and Baumbach share. "I brought all the creatures," she says, unclipping Wizard, the family's mini Bernedoodle, from the stroller and watching her bound toward the brick-and-ivy-covered back garden. "She's an edit dog. She's used to it here." So is Harold, whom Gerwig strollered over to this town house nearly every day, nursing him, letting him nap as her film took shape.

The scene on the monitor takes place near the end of *Little Women,* soon after Beth, the dearest of the four March sisters, has died. I would warn spoiler alert, but is there anyone not familiar with the basic outline of *Little Women*—an instant best seller in 1868, perpetually in print since, and adapted for the screen no fewer than eight times? Alcott's Civil War–era tale remains one of the most beloved coming-of-age stories about young women ever written, and here Jo, the rebellious writer and Alcott's alter ego, is telling her sisters that she has been working on new stories that are "just" about her and her sisters and therefore seem too quotidian to be compelling. "Writing doesn't confer importance, it reflects it," Jo frets. "No," challenges Amy, "I think writing about it will make it more important."

Some 80% of the film's dialogue is Alcott's—but these lines were written by Gerwig, and they can't help but feel like articles of faith. After all, Gerwig has been giving voice to the quotidian dramas that plague her and her kind, first as an actress, then as a writer, and finally as a director, for her entire career. And in the same way generations of women, from Simone de Beauvoir to Patti Smith to Elena Ferrante, have identified themselves in Jo March, the steely heroine who refused to sacrifice her values for the cultural restrictions of her time, a generation of wide-eyed, postcollegiate women found in Gerwig a similarly powerful avatar.

This started in the late aughts, in low-budget, lo-fi mumblecore films like *Hannah Takes the Stairs* and *Nights and Weekends,* and then in a trio of Baumbach's movies—*Greenberg, Frances Ha,* and *Mistress America* (the latter two cowritten by Gerwig)—in which she played heroines recognizable to a segment of first-wave millennials, earnest and sentimental and unafraid of their self-doubt and neediness. "We were eating Chinese food from paper boxes at the time, sitting on my sofa and half-watching a Greta Gerwig film," writes Sally Rooney in her 2017 novel *Conversation With Friends* (itself embodying the mores of a successive micro-generation). As readers, we know exactly what this means, so clearly has Gerwig been anointed patron saint of certain kind of ambling early adulthood.

But the real Gerwig lay somewhere behind this caricature: a filmmaker of uncanny ambition and artistic intent. This became clear with her solo directorial debut, *Lady Bird,* released in 2017 to rapturous critical acclaim. Intimate, nostalgic, and tender, *Lady Bird* was devoted to the strains and joys of a young woman's most important relationships—her parents, best friends, and first loves—and it earned Gerwig an Oscar nomination for best director (only the fifth time a woman had been nominated in the category). *Lady Bird* attracted tremendous goodwill but also a case of great expectations: What would Gerwig do next? What happens when a downtown New York indie antihero, a star beloved for her haplessness and ambivalence, becomes a filmmaker with all the agency and assurance to sign on to whatever she pleases?

The answer would be an adaptation of the novel she'd adored since she was a girl, and for which she'd already written a 400-page screenplay. After the 2018 Oscars Gerwig retreated to a cabin in Big Sur to revise *Little Women*: "I needed to spend some alone time with Louisa," she says. Gerwig felt such a kinship with Alcott (at 36, she is the same age as the author when the novel was published) that she had an astrologer compare their charts. "Because so much of making art requires *some* amount of mysticism," she says.

Today, in the courtyard of the Greenwich Hotel, Gerwig is dressed not unlike Alcott, or Jo March, in a high-necked, long-sleeved indigo APC blouse with small blue buttons down the front. She can be deliberate and considered—speaking with measured ellipses, holding her chin in her hand, Winnie-the-Pooh-style when thinking—but then erupt with the energy of a 1940s screwball-comedy heroine. "I mean, goodness, you're getting completely unfiltered just me sifting through what we did," she exclaims at one point. Like the characters in her early films, Gerwig seems to be letting you in on the way her mind works in real time. She will later admit that speaking about *Little Women* with unbridled ardor for two hours left her exhausted. Gerwig appears to do everything this way: with full thrust, with her entire gravitational force behind her. This was certainly true of making *Little Women*.

"It's epic personal filmmaking," says Meryl Streep, who plays "the old battle-ax" Aunt March. "It's very much the author's tale, and as a result it's CONTINUED ON PAGE 101



SOFT POWER
Little Women, which Gerwig adapted and directed, will be released on Christmas Day. Chanel coat and pants. Monique Péan ring. Gianvito Rossi shoes. In this story: hair, Sally Hershberger; makeup, Hannah Murray. Details, see In This Issue.

SET DESIGN, MARY HOWARD STUDIO.
PHOTOGRAPHED AT SALUTATIONS.



STEP UP

"One of my intentions in my filmmaking is to humanize black women and girls," says Chukwu. Alexander McQueen jacket, skirt, and belt. Ana Khouri earring. Manolo Blahnik boots. Hair, Edris Nicholls; makeup, Janessa Paré. Details, see In This Issue.

Fashion Editor: Phyllis Posnick.

PRODUCED BY WILLIAM GALUSHA



The Advocate

With her devastatingly powerful new film *Clemency,* Chinonye Chukwu is poised to transform the way we think about criminal justice. By Alexis Okeowo. Photographed by Anton Corbijn.

ON A BREEZY FALL MORNING, the filmmaker Chinonye Chukwu walks back into the Harlem café where, in an earlier life, she spent many mornings in tears. A sliver of a space called Il Caffe Latte, the restaurant is warm and sunlit, with small tables squeezed together and a few orange stools in front of a big window. A few years ago, Chukwu lived down the street and would come in almost every day. She was reading a book about Troy Davis, a black man from Georgia who was convicted and then executed in 2011 for the murder of a police officer, despite compelling evidence of his innocence and widespread protests for the state to grant him clemency. "I remember reading in that corner and just sobbing," Chukwu tells me as we look over at the window. At the time, she was listening to film scores on her headphones and drinking coffee after coffee. "It was me quieting myself and sitting in the emotional moment of each character," she recalls. "I was probably talking to myself a lot."

Chukwu is more relaxed this morning, if a little restless. Her hair is pulled back into two goddess braids, and she is wearing a black suede-and-leather jacket over a thin gray sweater and slim dark pants. She has come into New York from Los Angeles, where she's lived for almost two years, for an advance screening of her acclaimed new film *Clemency,* which she wrote and directed. The film, out at the end of December, is a haunting character study of a prison warden, movingly played by Alfre Woodard, who is emotionally conflicted over an execution she has to oversee. It is bleak and elegant, an unrelenting examination of the collateral damage of state-sanctioned violence on the people who witness and carry it out.

Clemency is also poised to catalyze a mounting national conversation on prison reform. Early in 2019, it won the U.S. Dramatic Grand Jury Prize, the top honor in its category, at Sundance; Chukwu was the first black woman to receive the award. "It was surreal. It didn't hit me for a couple of months, and I didn't get the magnitude of it CONTINUED ON PAGE 102

Rashid Johnson made his name with evocative work built from unusual materials. As he prepares for a major New York show, he proves he's an artist unafraid of any medium.

By Dodie Kazanjian.

"Art is terrible as a quick responder to circumstance," Rashid Johnson tells me when I visit him in late July at his country home on the East End of Long Island. The shingle-style house is set on five acres of wooded land, at a safe distance from the nonstop cocktail parties of the Hamptons. Johnson, still limping from a fractured cuboid bone in one foot, incurred while he played soccer three months ago with his young son, Julius, shows me into the all-in-one kitchen-living-dining room. The house is expansive and relatively new, and the furniture is as laid-back as Johnson, who made the 20-foot-long walnut dining table and the benches we're sitting on.

"After the Trump election, people kept saying, 'This is going to be a great time for art,' " Johnson says. "Honestly, it's not. Artists' practices take time—they're not quickly conjured. But sometimes there can be nowness in it, and there are moments where I think my work does allow you, in an honest and emotional way, to see the now."

About five years ago, Johnson began a series called *Anxious Men*—boldly gestural paintings of black faces that he initially thought of as self-portraits. He had stopped drinking, and the ever-present anxieties of contemporary life had been intensified when he was "in social situations without the shield of alcohol." But



Jump Cut



RENAISSANCE MAN
"It was explained to me once that creativity is best thought of as a person who is willing to connect disconnected things," Johnson says. Photographed by Kendall Mills.



RASHID JOHNSON. *UNTITLED BROKEN CROWD*, 2019. CERAMIC TILE, MIRROR TILE, SPRAY ENAMEL, BRONZE, OIL STICK, BRANDED RED OAK FLOORING, BLACK SOAP, WAX, 94.75 X 128.5 IN. PHOTO: MARTIN PARSEKIAN.

many people who encountered these portraits told him they saw themselves. "I realized I wasn't alone in this anxious state," he says. "These are challenging and troubling times." By 2018, his *Anxious Men* (made from black soap and wax on tiles) had become *Broken Men,* large mosaic paintings made with fractured mirrors, scraps of wood, and shards from discarded ceramic sculptures. The anxiety on display feels heightened and permanent.

> "Rashid's work confronts and reflects the angst and the emotional crisis of our time," says the artist George Condo. "He's one of the few larger-than-life artists working today"

Johnson is a big presence, tall (six-foot-three), powerfully built, full of bursting energy and quicksilver intelligence. At 42, he's one of the strongest voices in contemporary art, a multimedia artist who is immersed in the world around him, and this has been a breakthrough year. His first feature film, an adaptation of Richard Wright's novel *Native Son,* premiered at the Sundance Film Festival last January, and was picked up by HBO, where it aired in April. "I always knew I wanted to make movies," he tells me, "and I'm likely to direct another feature film."

In November, a solo exhibition opened at his New York gallery, Hauser & Wirth, where he has shown for the past eight years, featuring his latest art film, *The Hikers.* (The film was also the focus of two museum shows, in Mexico City and Aspen, this past year.) The seven-minute film depicts an encounter between two figures—one is ascending, his movements anguished and tortuous; the other is descending, moving proudly and triumphantly. Their wordless confrontation has elements of suspicion, anxiety, love, and recognition. "I tried to imagine the inner reactions of two black men, alone, hiking in a place like Aspen, where you don't expect to confront someone who looks like you," he explains.

Rashid was born in "arguably the first big era of unapologetic blackness," says Naomi Beckwith, a senior curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. (Johnson was born and raised in the city. Beckwith, who sees herself as part of the same generation as Johnson, met him for the first time at an art opening for Kerry James Marshall.) "We always felt that our blackness was necessary, not an impediment. What does it mean to be a first generation that doesn't feel the need to look respectable in a kind of bourgeois, Sunday-best way?"

Growing up in the Chicago suburb of Evanston, Johnson was like the "bridge" between his two siblings—his brother was 10 years older, and his sister was 10 years younger. Their mother, Cheryl, a poet and scholar of African history who taught at Northwestern and later at Loyola, instilled in Johnson a profound respect for history and literature. "My mother is by far the biggest influence in my life," he says. "Her intellectual curiosity, compassion, and empathy are the building blocks that make me up." His father, Jimmy, is an artist who worked in publishing and then in electronics. Johnson's parents divorced when he was two. A few years later, Cheryl remarried a Nigerian man, Carlton Odim, a lawyer whose pan-African interests added a new dimension to Johnson's thinking. "I grew up with a lot of African imagery in our home," he says. A poster for Ntozake Shange's play *for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf* hung on a wall in his childhood bedroom. "I was interested early in every kind of art," he remembers, "but I couldn't really draw as a young person. I wanted to, but I was too impatient. I wanted to just conjure the thing. What I now realize is that I like to draw with my arm, not with my fingers." As a teenager, he discovered graffiti. "The spray can and the big marker allowed me to draw in a more exaggerated and physical way and on a bigger canvas—and the canvas was the city of Chicago."

In high school he was undisciplined, running with "kids who weren't necessarily academic all-stars." He almost dropped out but at the last minute "righted the ship," he says. "Everyone in my family had a graduate degree." He applied to Columbia College in Chicago with the idea of becoming a filmmaker. The summer before college, he spent every day in the library, reading CONTINUED ON PAGE 104

ABOUT FACE

Large, colorful mosaic paintings like *Untitled Broken Crowd* (ABOVE) and *Untitled Broken Men* (OPPOSITE) appear in Johnson's latest show.



RASHID JOHNSON. *UNTITLED BROKEN MEN*, 2019. CERAMIC TILE, MIRROR TILE, SPRAY ENAMEL, BRONZE, OIL STICK, BLACK SOAP, WAX. 50X 38.25 IN. PHOTO: MARTIN PARSEKIAN.



Dolce & Gabbana

"We enjoy making something glamorous, and we love the sense of happiness, summertime," said Stefano Gabbana recently. "It's our philosophy." Indeed: Joie de vivre is always in high supply at Dolce & Gabbana, revealing itself in looks that sing with Mediterranean romance. Model Gigi Hadid wears a **Dolce & Gabbana** silk printed shirt ($1,245), wrap skirt ($1,245), necklace, and shoes; select Dolce & Gabbana stores.

Fashion Editor: Tabitha Simmons.



Marc Jacobs

The country-western twang of this breezy dress, with its appliquéd flowers and charming doily collar, casts our modern moment in a Technicolor glow—as much enamored with the past as looking forward to the future. **Marc Jacobs** crochet-trimmed cotton dress. **Stephen Jones for Marc Jacobs** hat. Both at marcjacobs.com.

Reasons to Be Cheerful

Dressed in spring's exuberant prints and girlish shapes in the sweetest, most sherbety hues, Gigi Hadid accentuates the positive. Photographed by Sean Thomas.

Fendi

"When designing," Silvia Venturini Fendi says, "I start with simple things, like an emotion, for instance: an emotion of a sunny day, when you really feel you are free, ready to go out and meet people, and you are optimistic toward life." Hadid makes an ideal muse, clad in a **Fendi** glazed canvas coat ($3,890; fendi.com) that recalls the joyous abandon of 1960s mod.

BEAUTY NOTE
Perfect and protect your complexion. Maybelline New York Dream Urban Cover with SPF 50 has an antioxidant-rich formula that shields skin from pollution with a natural finish.







Louis Vuitton

For a collection inspired by the Belle Époque, Nicolas Ghesquière's vision for spring 2020 had a surprising amount to say about the here and now. Big sleeves and short skirts spoke to both the shifting gears of women's liberation in 19th-century France and the desire today to dress for oneself. Hadid steps lightly in a **Louis Vuitton** belted dress, bag, and shoes; select Louis Vuitton stores.



Ralph Lauren

Embedded in Ralph Lauren's all-American ethos is an unwavering authenticity—the kind that sees one throw a colorful slip dress over a plain white tee (and think nothing of accessorizing with a flamingo). "I've always believed optimism was the core value of the American spirit and provides a kind of energy to propel our lives forward in so many positive ways," he says. **Ralph Lauren Collection** satin dress; select Ralph Lauren stores. **Levi's** T-shirt, $30; levi.com. **Stephen Jones for Marc Jacobs** hat.



Prada

Of course, Miuccia Prada is right when she says that "the person should be more important than the clothes"—but when tailoring as strong as this meets a sweet motif and a graphic play of colors (electric orange! shiny teal!), the pressure is on. **Prada** coat, shirt ($980), and skirt; select Prada stores.



Marni

"It's a claim for freedom—a joyful riot emerging through a kaleidoscope of bright colors and fluid lines, and it's imbued with a profound sense of humanity." This is how Francesco Risso describes his spring collection, which riffs intelligently on an environment in crisis. Inspired by the energy of protest, his clothes, which use a blend of upcycled and organic textiles, have his belief in positive change sewn right into them. **Marni** top ($1,290) and skirt ($1,650); modaoperandi.com. **Louis Vuitton** shoes.

Versace

Versace's famous jungle print in a pretty new colorway? That's something worth smiling about. "Colors are life," Donatella Versace says. "Anywhere you see colors, there's an intrinsic sense of joy." **Versace** dress ($1,725), bandeau top ($425), tights, and bag; versace.com. In this story: hair, Ryan Mitchell; makeup, Erin Parsons. Details, see In This Issue.



PRODUCED BY SELECT SERVICES

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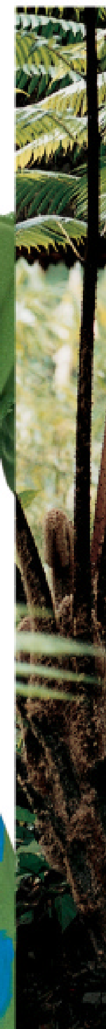










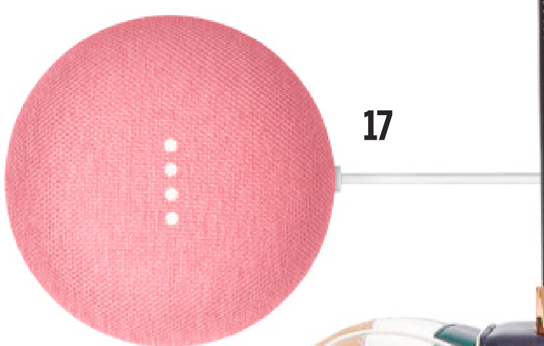


No. 19
WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

While Brooklyn shops like Precycle and Package Free have renounced all single-use plastics, the Spur Jewelry Project creates new pieces from old baubles (#20).









20 for 2020

In the new decade, we're renewing our commitment to core values—among them, sustainability, inclusivity, and collaboration.

STILL LIFES: COURTESY OF BRANDS/WEBSITES



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No. 9

PEACE TREATY

A sense of optimism powers both the latest additions to the wellness space—from the meditation app Tap In to the Cheval Blanc resort in St. Barts (#18)—and Casadei's new collaboration with the Ethical Fashion Initiative (#11).



1. LARQ WATER BOTTLE, $95; LIVELARQ.COM. 2. MAJE BLAZER, $490; MAJE.COM. 3. BROTHER VELLIES SANDAL, $735; BROTHERVELLIES.COM. 4. RENTRAYAGE X FASANO CERAMICHE WALL PLATE, $325; RENTRAYAGE.COM. 5. MARNI DRESS; MARNI STORES. 6. *VOGUE*, 2003. PHOTOGRAPHED BY ARTHUR ELGORT. 7. MONIQUE PÉAN RING; MONIQUEPEAN.COM. 8. AYR RECYCLED JEANS, $245; AYR.COM. 9. TAP IN APP; TAPINTOGETHER.COM. 10. RAVE REVIEW UPCYCLED COAT, $1,984; MATCHESFASHION.COM. 11. CASADEI FOR ETHICAL FASHION INITIATIVE BOOT; CASADEI.COM. 12. DIOR AND RIMOWA CHAMPAGNE CASE; (800) 929-DIOR. 13. "JACQUES-LOUIS DAVID MEETS KEHINDE WILEY" EXHIBITION; BROOKLYNMUSEUM.ORG. 14. NICHE RESTAURANT, NYC; NAKAMURANYC.COM/NICHE. *NEW YORKER*, 2019. PHOTOGRAPHED BY HEAMI LEE. 15. A.P.C. QUILT, $340; APC-US.COM. 16. GABRIELA HEARST BAG; GABRIELAHEARST.COM. 17. RECYCLED-PLASTIC GOOGLE NEST MINI, $49; STORE.GOOGLE.COM. 18. CHEVAL BLANC ST-BARTH ISLE DE FRANCE RESORT; CHEVALBLANC.COM. 19. PRECYCLE; PRECYCLENYC.COM. PACKAGE FREE; PACKAGEFREESHOP.COM. 20. SPUR NECKLACE, $450; SPURJEWELRY.COM.

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No. 13

JOIN THE CLUB

With compositions that recall Old Masters, Kehinde Wiley's portraits—on view this month at the Brooklyn Museum—place modern black subjects within the art-historical canon.

EARTH MOTHER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 67

a material with 100 times the environmental impact of wool. (It takes four goats to make enough cashmere for a single sweater, resulting in a need for grazing land that has destroyed the steppes of Mongolia and led to desertification and sandstorms in northern China.) Her label now uses regenerated cashmere, made from factory scraps that are shredded and respun into new yarn, and focuses on alpaca ("a much more friendly material") and traceable wool (four sweaters from one sheep).

McCartney also holds an annual forum for all of her suppliers to talk with them about what her company requires and to share information on recent advances. "A lot of people see change as something scary," she says, "but the mills are interested in working with innovators.

"I think that in a sense we're a project," she adds. "We're trying to prove that this is a viable way to do business in our industry—and that you don't have to sacrifice any style or any edginess or coolness in order to work this way. At the end of the day," she says, "we're a fashion house trying to deliver on the promise of desirability. Without that, I can't even have this conversation. So I have to try and find a healthy balance—and doing both jobs is a balance. It's the same as being a mum. My other 'family' is work. And I have to find the balance between this conversation of fashion and the conversation of consciousness—and they have to complement each other." □

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 71

a big, bellowing joyful note, like an opera singer in the finale.

"I feel like every relationship goes in waves of sex," she says. "You're like, Hey, do we need to plan this? And now, with pregnancy, things have been *real-ly diff-er-ent*." She laughs. "Because there's this huge bulge that can be sensitive if you lay on it or go into a new position. I've been literally asking every single one of my friends who have had babies or who're pregnant, like, 'What positions do you guys do?' This has to be a normal conversation among mothers."

It's no surprise that she and Schumer clicked. "She's a goddamn fire starter," says Schumer. "Ashley just knocks the wind out of you. She's one of those rare, really authentic people. There's just no horseshit, you know? That's a compliment, right?"

Graham and Thomas head into the yoga room and get down on their mats, but before they begin to inhale and exhale and seal in the day's intentions, a little gossip. "So my publicist was freaking out," says Graham, "because she's like, 'Mama Glow is your doula? She's DJ Khaled's wife's doula!' "

There is a long pause as Thomas fixes Graham with a you're-not-gonna-believe-this look. "That birth was Snapchatted."

"It was?"

"I do not recommend," says Thomas.

"He *Snapchatted*?"

"Yes, girl. While she was giving birth, his publicist was texting me. 'Latham, you gotta get him off Snapchat.' It was so wild because when you're Snapchatting, there's geolocation, so people showed up."

"Oh, no, to the *hospital*?"

"YAS. So first we were like, Can you not do that? And then he would hide, and then he just figured out how to film in a way that we didn't see it. Thankfully, he wasn't, like, in her vulva, but it was definitely as the baby was coming out and there was video."

For better and for worse, pregnancy has become pop culture. Something that was once considered so private as to be hidden away from the world now unfolds live on social media. Serena Williams wonders if it all started with Demi Moore on the cover of *Vanity Fair* in 1991, naked and pregnant, shocking all the squeamish prudes and church ladies. "I was only 10 at the time," says Williams, "but I remember thinking that was cool." Ten years later, when *Us Weekly* focused its attention on questionable gossip and paparazzi shots of actresses pumping gas in Beverly Hills, the whole bizarro obsession with the "baby bump" took off. Tabloid copycats escalated their pursuit of the possibly pregnant, raising it to the level of stalking. One afternoon of bloat while leaving The Ivy and suddenly: IS JENNIFER PREGNANT? And then social media came along and women began to *own* their *narrative* by curating the *journey* of getting and being pregnant and giving birth and bouncing back—or not.

"I think it's a good thing," says Williams, "but it also puts a lot of pressure on women. For me, the whole lie about 'the snap back' was what bothered me. I had a little problem with the lies of girls on Instagram—like, coming out of the hospital holding the baby and . . . you know . . . looking thinner than before. That's not happening to me! That's one thing I've learned, and the thing I tell Ashley: Everybody—literally *every* body—is different. You might jump back in an hour. I didn't."

Thomas is now nearly climbing on top of Graham, coaxing her pelvis to open up to ease the pressure on her back. "Girl, look at this flexibility you hidin'," says Thomas. "I'm very flexible," says Graham, her head buried somewhere underneath her belly. "It comes in handy. How do you think I *got* like this?"

When the session is over—and after Graham reenacts some of her yoga poses so that Thomas can take Instagram-ready photos so that Graham can post them right away, because that is how it all works now—Graham and I head farther into Williamsburg to meet her husband for breakfast at The Hoxton hotel. "I think Justin is messing with me," she says as she stares into her phone in the Uber on the way there. "I just texted 'Almost there!' and he texted back, 'It's in Manhattan, right?' He's a jokester. He likes to get a rise out of me."

One day in 2005, when Graham was still working in relative obscurity as a "plus size" catalog model, she was running the elevator as a volunteer at The Journey, a nondenominational church in Manhattan she attended. A newcomer got on. "Hi. Welcome to the Journey," she purred. It was Ervin, who was so enchanted that he skipped Sunday service and rode up and down with her all morning. A couple of days later, "in an uncreepy way," she says, he found Graham on Facebook. Eventually they went out for coffee, dated for a year, and got married when Ashley was just 22.

When I tell Justin that it took us about four seconds to start behaving like we've known each other since high school, he says, "Ashley could have been cast as Wonder Woman, because she actually has a golden lasso. That old TV show with Lynda Carter? She would toss that golden lasso, put a lariat on somebody, and they would tell the truth. That's what Ashley does: She disarms people into being able to tell the truth—immediately."

"Well, and have *fun*," says Graham. Justin stares at me for a second. "Yeah, it's not like you're under duress." We get to talking about how fame is changing, that there seems to be zero tolerance for anything that reeks of fake. "I think in this generation, authenticity is everything," Graham says. "It's gold. There's nothing sexier than being your true, honest self. And the more you are, the more accepted you are, and the easier it is to navigate through success. I don't have a persona. This is it. Just be yourself!"

Graham wasn't always so self-confident. She was discovered in a mall in Omaha when she was 12 years old, and her first job was modeling bras for a defunct Midwestern chain that sold everything from makeup to electronics. "I don't know if it's even legal to have a 12-year-old model a bra," she says. Right out of the gate, Graham was labeled with the vague-yet-too-specific words "plus size." "If you would have asked me then if I felt plus-sized, I would have said, 'Well, I'm 12 years old and a size 10.' I had no correlation with that word. And as I grew up in the plus-size industry, it was like everybody was trying to do away with that label—get rid of it!—and now we are in a generation where women are embracing plus-size again, they're embracing the word *fat,* they're embracing *curvy* and *big girl,* because women are not one-dimensional. Why use just one word to describe such a wide variety of women?"

Graham got cast in a Lane Bryant show when she was 15. "It was one of the last big shows they did," she says. "I remember Mia Tyler was in it, and I had dinner with her father and Aerosmith, the whole band, afterward, and I didn't even know who they were. I turned to their drummer and said, 'So, what do you do for a living?' My mother kicked me under the table!" By the time Graham moved to New York, "the curve models," as she calls them, weren't getting any recognition. "You'd heard of Emme, you'd heard of maybe Kate Dillon or Sophie Dahl. I became best friends with Crystal Renn. We sort of raised each other in New York. She was just a year older than me, and we were figuring it out—she was the editorial queen. So she would teach me how to flip my hair naked in the mirror and how to pose and how to change my face. But I just never had the opportunity to do those things editorially until I was on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. That's when people started taking me seriously."

But the turning point came when she appeared in the infamous 2010 Lane Bryant ad that nearly got banned from television. "It was dubbed 'too risqué,' " says Graham. "And it was just me in lingerie and a trench coat going to meet my boyfriend for lunch and, you know, eating an actual meal. And it almost got taken off the air." But the media declared it a fat-shaming moment and the pressure forced them to keep it on. "Because why would a size 16 model in lingerie be banned from television and not a size 2 model?" Suddenly, Graham was doing Leno and fielding dozens of radio and press interviews. "It put me on the map," she says, "and it started a conversation."

Had she ever tried to fit the mold, to be thin? "I've never been thin, so I don't even know what that feels like. But I've had people tell me I needed to lose weight. I've tried every diet known to man, but they don't work, because I'm a curvy woman—a big-boned, healthy, corn-fed Nebraska girl. It is who I am. And once I accepted that, the more confident I became, and that's when my career really started to take off."

We have all ordered the same enormous full English breakfast, and we have all cleaned our plates. "Honestly, it's Justin's fault," says Graham. "I eat like him." And then funnier, in gravely macho voice: "I eat like a MAAAAN." She laughs. "But it's perfect right now, because I'm pregnant."

Unbeknownst to me, the couple planned to reveal the baby's gender to *Vogue* this morning. Now, though, they get into a hilarious, bickery back and forth about exactly how to tell me. Finally Graham says, "Can you tell what I'm carrying? Because there's, like, a thing, where you can tell by, like, the shape of the bump."

For some reason, I think it's a girl, I say.

"That's so interesting," says Justin. "Everyone says that. Maybe it's just that people feel like it's on-brand for Ashley to have a girl."

We get into a conversation about how pregnant couples have to constantly answer the same questions, every day, over and over: When are you due? How are you feeling? What's the sex? "It's the natural progression," says Justin. "Oh, you guys are dating? How's it going? Do you think you might get married? Oh, congratulations! When are the kids? What is the gender? When's it due? So it's just this progression of small talk that people feel like they have to engage in throughout different stages in your life as a couple."

Graham rolls her eyes. "And also they're just curious." Pause. "Like other mothers. They really, really want to know."

Finally Graham just comes out with it: "It's a boy." She grew up with two sisters and is super close to her mom. "I don't know anything about boys, so I'm so excited." Justin chimes in: "She *owed* me a boy. What with all of this wonderful, divine, feminine energy she has around her 24/7, I want a little sidekick." Just like every other prying little busybody, I can't help but ask, When are you due? "Okay," says Graham, heaving a comic sigh, faux put-upon. "I'll *tell* you: January 11. He'll be a Capricorn—just like his dad." They are both beaming. Graham looks around and realizes that we are the only people left in the restaurant. She looks at me, and then Justin, and then lets it rip: "It's a boooooooy!!!" □

NO LIMITS

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partying also seems to have prepared her for her career. Hennessy remembers what it was like to go out with her older sister: "We would go to house parties, and the whole party would surround her in a circle. She would entertain by dancing, doing a headstand or a split. It was like her own little concert. So it's like she grew up to be who she truly is." But shortly after graduation, Cardi was kicked out of the house for fighting with her little sister, and she moved in with a boyfriend. "He didn't have a job, and I didn't have a job," she remembers. "Me and his mom used to smoke weed, and it's like, you're hungry but you're high and you cannot even, like, fucking eat food because you don't have money for it."

She enrolled at Borough of Manhattan Community College and got a job downtown as a cashier at the Amish Market, but the $290 in weekly earnings barely covered her expenses. When her English professor told her not to come back—that she had failed his class due to a pair of absences and a pair of tardies—she bawled, and dropped out. The Amish Market then fired her for giving discounts—but not

before her manager suggested she walk across the street and inquire at New York Dolls, the strip club. When Cardi says that stripping saved her, this is what she means: "At that time I just felt like my world was coming to an end. I was that teenager who was like, I don't need nobody. But my boyfriend kept cheating on me. He and I used to get into arguments, hitting each other a lot. Girls like to say, 'I will beat a nigga's ass.' I used to have that mentality. I used to hit my first boyfriend, until he started hitting me back and it just got out of control. But I started stripping, and I made enough money to move out."

At first she told her parents that she was making money babysitting for a rich white family, though over time she embraced the profession. At 19 she got her breasts done and started posting humorous Vines and Instagram videos about her work, which garnered her a following and landed her lucrative gigs hosting parties. These early clips anticipate the film *Hustlers*—in which Cardi has a small scene-stealing role—by casting the strip club as a place of opportunity and ingenuity. Refusing to be an object by being her own subject, she preempted misogynistic speculation. "You doing a good deed," she told her prospective customers in one early posting. "You giving a young female some shmoney, and you giving her kids some shmoney. . . . Maybe the next day you get a raise." On her 23rd birthday, she worked her final shift.

It did not take long for Cardi to be recognized for advancing an inclusive feminism that acknowledges the difficult decisions that women not born into privilege must weigh. "Women always want to talk about feminism and supporting everybody," she says, "except if it doesn't fit your category of what to support. Certain women that claim they are feminists only think that a certain type of woman should represent that. Like oh, you have to have a college degree, and you have to fucking be, practically, like, a senator or Mother Teresa or a Christian holy woman. No, you do not. Feminism means being equal to a man. And I am."

Cardi's temper is well documented, but she is working on it. "I'm really calm," she insists. "I'm the type of person now who like, if we talk about things and settle things, I will do that." She's becoming practiced at fending off baseless accusations about her old career. "I just hate when people be like, oh, you used to be a stripper, so you're a prostitute, you used to fuck guys. I never used to fuck guys. The thing about it is, when you're known as a stripper that fucks guys for money, everybody hates you because you're fucking up the game. You're making guys expect more than what you should be giving, and the next bitch pays for it. I don't have to give guys no ass. You want something from me? I want something from you. I want your money, you want my time. So I'm just gonna give you time. Once you start expecting more, my phone number's disconnected. Bye."

Cardi has not shied away from excoriating President Trump's treatment of women, and some of her most delicious rants in recent years have been attacks on either his policies or the ominous cultural shift she believes he has set in motion. She has been an American-history buff since grade school and is especially effective at hitting progressive talking points with humor and clarity. (See, for example, the Instagram video in which she spells out the difference between government shutdowns under Trump and President Obama.) She is a longtime Bernie Sanders supporter, and in August she joined Sanders's presidential campaign to produce a video conversation between them, out of a nail salon in Detroit. She is passionate about combating police brutality. She worries about race-baiting on the internet. She has mixed feelings about gun control and carries a knife herself for protection. ("I'm from New York. We don't play with guns," she says.) Most of all she worries about the costs of education and health care. "It's like, why is this such a successful country and we don't have Medicare for everyone? It's like, how are people gonna work if they're sick? People gonna fucking be paying forever. And we don't have freaking free schools? That discourages people to want to go to school if you gotta pay for it. Especially the way that social media makes it seems like everybody is the boss of something. Not everybody can be a boss. People gotta have certain jobs to keep things going. Let's say I go to school for my job, and my school bill is more than I'm gonna be paid for. Then I'm not gonna want to do that job. So it's like, who's gonna do that job? It discourages people from wanting to learn."

She cannot help but understand that she is a product of the same technological conditions that gave rise to Trump, but as a social media provocateur par excellence, she can read the president like a book. "I feel like not any of these Democrats have a really strong support base—I'm gonna say a fan base, because it's almost like a fan base, what Trump has," she explains. "Because he was an entertainer, Trump knows how to get them to keep on talking about him. All these little antics that he do, like get into arguments with Chrissy Teigen, it's just techniques to get attention. And I get that. You like a certain artist that do crazy shit. But this person is in charge of our country. This person is in charge of our well-being. When it comes to my president, I want my president to be, like, extremely holy. That is the person I want to look up to. I don't want my president to have any hatred toward a certain type of people. I don't want my president to be arguing with freaking celebrities or caring what people think of him. I want my president to tell me an answer on shit that really matters. I don't want my president to entertain me. I just don't.

"One thing that I like about Bernie," she adds, "is that, you know, there's proof that he's been doing this for years. That he been caring about people for years. That it's inside of him, being a humanitarian. When I see the candidates be like, oh well, some of his bills, they not perfect. If he's such a perfect person, why is Vermont not perfect? People are not perfect, but he has the perfect intentions. He naturally cares about minorities. He actually cares about people getting Medicare because he knows they can't afford it. I don't feel like he's just saying these things 'cause he want the vote."

Cardi always intended to have a child by the age of 25, but she took care to wait until she had the means to provide for that child herself. Touring and performing create their own challenges: Although Cardi can depend on her own mother for help, it's more complicated as her daughter gets older and more aware. "Flying is hard on Kulture, so if I go to a place and I'm not going to stay more than five days, I'm not bringing her," she says. "But now that's getting harder, because she's sleeping on my chest and she doesn't want to let me go, or she sees you on FaceTime and she's crying. It's kind of like a friendship now, and it's hard to leave your

little friend." Occasionally her candor about the challenge of balancing a career in overdrive with the demands of motherhood has been turned against her. In early October, on *Access Hollywood,* she cataloged the stresses of simultaneously recording an album, creating a hip-hop talent contest (Netflix's *Rhythm + Flow,* which debuted in October), promoting a film (*Hustlers*), and designing a clothing collection for Fashion Nova, only to watch as the television show ran a headline on its website suggesting that as a result of her divided attentions, Kulture has been calling someone else "Mommy." (The show has since apologized.)

"I could shake my ass, I could be the most ratchet-est person ever, I could get into a fight tomorrow, but I'm still a great mom," she says. "All the time I'm thinking about my kid. I'm shaking my ass, but at the same time I'm doing business, I'm on the phone with my business manager saying, make sure that a percentage of my check goes to my kid's trust. I give my daughter so much love, and I'm setting her up for a future. I want to tell her that a lot of the shit that I have done in life—no matter what I did, knowing that I wanted to have kids made me go harder to secure a good future for my kids."

Lately she and Offset have been talking about codesigning a collection of children's clothing. "And the CEO is over there," she says, flicking her silver mane in the direction of the bedroom. "Right, Kulture? I'm busting my ass right now so you could have a good car when you're 18, so you can go to school and have an apartment that I could pay for. If my daughter wants to go to college, that's okay, but I just want her to be an owner of whatever the fuck she wants to own. Just be an owner. Be the boss." □

LABOR OF LOVE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 80

hers," she says. The film, which begins with the sisters as adults, unfolds in two time lines, mirrored in the two halves of the book, which were originally published by Alcott as separate volumes. The first takes place when the girls are teenagers; the second, seven years later. And the ending, an invention of Gerwig's, introduces a meta-narrative comparing the paths of Jo and Alcott. "I had the idea that if I could make Jo publishing a book at the end the thing you didn't know you needed to see," she says, "it would be the way you want people to end up together in a movie." She places her hand over her heart and leans across the table. "You want her to get that book, and you don't realize it until you see it and she's holding it in her hands. You're like, *That's* the thing. That book."

"When I watched the first cut of *Little Women,*" says Baumbach, "I felt like you know exactly why this movie's being made, because it's so personal. It both serves the story and honors the book, and then is really something that only she could do." Painstakingly detailed, the film is traditional in look, but not staid. Gerwig kept her camera in constant, restless motion and quickened the pace of Alcott's dialogue: "I wanted to hear all the lines traditionally, but said at the speed of life," she says. "Great things said with irreverence." For the waltz scenes, Gerwig brought in choreographer Monica Bill Barnes, who had the actors dance to The Cure and David Bowie. And Watson, a trained yoga instructor, led the group in yoga and meditation. "Having so many girls leading the way on set definitely changed the tone," says Ronan. "We were all completely hyper with each other, and Greta is such a girl's girl herself, she really captured that energy."

When they wrapped, Gerwig was six months pregnant, but thanks to a wardrobe of A-line dresses and cocoon coats, the cast say, they had no idea. "I just figured that was her style at the moment," says Timothée Chalamet, who plays Jo's neighbor Laurie. They'd shot in Concord, Massachusetts—Alcott's home—with Gerwig going so far as to build an exact replica of Orchard House, where Alcott wrote (and set) *Little Women.* "It's a special place, all of these people living in proximity to each other and reimagining the world," Gerwig says of Concord. "It gets inside of you." She is referring to the cluster of American thinkers who congregated there more than a century ago, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Emerson lived across the street from the Alcotts and was the family's longtime benefactor. Thoreau is thought by some biographers to have been Alcott's inspiration for Laurie and would take the young Alcott sisters on nature walks around neighboring Walden Pond. During filming, Gerwig spent weekends doing the same. She also visited nearby Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, home to all of the authors' graves, where admirers leave pens at the headstones. At Alcott's, Gerwig left a yellow Lamy fountain pen.

"Jo is the person I always wanted to be," says Gerwig. The youngest of three, she wrote constantly as a teenager growing up in Sacramento, California, composing plays and forcing her family to act them out—her mother after long shifts as an ob-gyn nurse, her father at the end of a workday at a local credit union. There were also sketches for homecoming assemblies at school, and volumes of "hilarious and tragic" journals. Jo wears her "scribble suit" when she retreats to the attic to write; Gerwig wore her father's Hawaiian shirts and wrote everywhere—on buses, in chemistry class, at the dentist's office. She still does: "I enjoy feeling as if I'm stealing it from the world," she says, "like I'm getting away with something. If it becomes too formal, I'm sunk. I need to be a bit clandestine."

Sitting on the parlor floor of the town house, with Harold perched in her arms, Gerwig wears an oversize Hawaiian shirt—much like the ones she used to borrow from her father, except this one is from the store Otte down the street. (Her criteria for shopping post-Harold? "It has to be very close to me!" And buttons up the front for nursing.) Her embrace of a brimming life is accompanied by no small amount of doubt. "I was always scared about being a mother," she admits, "in terms of what it would mean for what I was able to do." During the shoot, she remembers, she went home at night to her rented house in Concord and discovered Cardi B's Instagram (Gerwig has never had an account of her own). She watched the rapper's pregnancy and birth reveals. "She'd do videos about how her hair looked better, but then she was mad because she had terrible heartburn. Everything. I would eat it up. I've just been very moved by women who've claimed all of it."

Gerwig turned in her rough cut of *Little Women* in March. "I knew that as soon as I did that, some part of me would relax and then the baby would come," she says. Harold Ralph Gerwig Baumbach arrived 24 hours later ("I gave him all the names," Gerwig says). She planned a maternity leave, but then

Streep came into town to record dialogue, and Gerwig brought Harold to the sound studio. "I felt like he was being christened by Meryl," she says.

In a few hours she'll leave Harold and Wizard with Baumbach for the weekend and drive upstate in a rented minivan with her five best friends from Barnard. It's a rare reunion—typically her weekends are spent close to home, "just hanging out with Noah and the baby, and writing, and making each other laugh." They like to visit Baumbach's brother Nico, a writer and academic, and his wife, the playwright, Annie Baker, in Brooklyn. (The two have a baby about the same age as Harold and will be his godparents.) They enjoy going to the theater, and Gerwig likes to cook but only when Baumbach agrees to act as sous-chef. They are both starting to experiment with making baby food, currently sweet potatoes mixed with breast milk and oatmeal.

In fact, Baumbach is mid-puree at the appointed time of our phone interview and apologizes for being late. When a cry issues from the background, he goes to retrieve Harold: "You're getting a live version of how it works," he says. With Harold happily situated in his lap, the filmmaker discusses Gerwig's impact on his life. "Since we've been together, the work I've done, even that hasn't technically involved her, is hugely influenced by her. I think I could get in my head too much in my earlier career. She's helped me lose myself."

He met Gerwig while casting his 2010 film *Greenberg*. The following year they cowrote the screenplay for *Frances Ha* and became a couple, the news of which inspired some critics to describe Gerwig as his muse rather than cowriter. "I remember being very frustrated by that and wanting to correct it," Gerwig says. Journalists also asked whether Baumbach had opened doors for her. They do that less now. "But the answer is: Yes, of course, for so many reasons. But he's also this incredibly important collaborator and influence on me. *The* most important." She pauses. "But I think I was hell-bent on making my own films, so I would've done it anyway."

Now she can open doors for him. Margot Robbie approached Gerwig about working on a Barbie film, which Robbie had just signed on to produce and star in. Gerwig agreed to take it on—with Baumbach as cowriter. (There are reports that Gerwig will direct, but for now she says they are just focused on the screenplay.) "I think the pleasure of writing for us is that it seeps into everything," Gerwig says. When she and Baumbach have a script's structure set, they will each take sections, work on them alone, and then swap them at the end of the day. "And then I get to hear him laugh at things I've written, and then I get to laugh at things he's written."

Baumbach's new film, *Marriage Story,* a searing account of divorce, opened in November and garnered raves. If both Baumbach and Gerwig receive best-director nominations, it will be a first for a couple in Oscar history. "In general, it was an exciting year," Baumbach says. "I'd show her a cut of my movie, and then a few months later, I'm watching her movie. I don't want to sound sickeningly happy, but it's a truly great thing to watch someone you love make something and love the thing they make. I don't know how else to say it without saying *great* a lot."

A few days before we meet at the editing studio, Gerwig and I take a window table at Café Cluny and she orders steak frites. She says she keeps a list of future project ideas on her iPhone and in the pages of brightly colored Smythson notebooks. There's *Barbie,* and *Little Women* producer Amy Pascal says she and Gerwig have spoken about making a musical together. "I want to keep expanding the idea of what stories you can tell," Gerwig says. But first: Chekhov. This spring she will play Masha in Sam Gold's production of *Three Sisters* on Broadway; it will be the first time she has acted in more than four years. "I got scared about doing it, and Sam said, 'What better thing could you do as a writer and a director than memorize Chekhov?'

"I feel like there's been lots of moments that I've done things that I think people aren't sure how to fit into their notion of me," she says, methodically folding her french fry in half and dipping it first in mayonnaise then ketchup. "A friend of mine texted me because actually *Three Sisters* was announced the same week as *Barbie,* and they said, 'You have the weirdest résumé of anyone in the world.' But it sort of feels exactly right. And I guess I enjoy not being completely categorizable in that way."

"It's all storytelling," says the actor and playwright Tracy Letts, who played roles in both *Lady Bird* and *Little Women,* "so I don't know if she has to choose." But Gerwig says she feels most like a director. "It's big and it's scary, but it's also the thing that comes most naturally to me. I think Francis Ford Coppola said to me that all the best directors had been actors. He said, 'I acted. Marty acted and Steven acted. Orson acted.' I was like, 'Well, what a wonderful group!' "

When her steak arrives she exclaims, "Oh, my goodness, I've really done it!" She then proceeds to eat every bite, even as she places her fork and knife down to accent her answers with gestures, smacking her hand across her chest, for instance, when talking about the injustice of Henry James's criticism of Alcott. Journalists have described Gerwig as earnest and intense, and she is both of these things, but those words, especially when applied to women, imply a lack of humor or playfulness. Gerwig clearly thinks and feels deeply, but she is not grave or lacking in self-awareness or joy. It could be that people are simply not used to someone who so fully embraces who they are and what they are feeling at a given moment.

It is this quality that is perhaps most responsible for her success. "Who she is, is exactly expressed onscreen," says Streep. "She's just letting us see the world as she sees it; it's intuitive and it's certain."

Is there any similarity to bringing a film and a child into the world? "I don't know. Maybe ask me in 18 years." Gerwig smiles sheepishly and sighs. "Yes, I think that feeling of forever being underqualified and kind of awed by the thing." She then checks the time and realizes she has to get home to feed the baby. On her wrist is a 1950s Tiffany men's watch, a gift from Baumbach several years back, originally belonging to a judge and inscribed on the back TO JUSTICE MORRIS EDER, A GRAND PERSON AND SINCERE FRIEND. As we pay the bill she apologizes for her abrupt departure, "Everything happens in these 90-minute to two-hour increments between feedings." About the length of a film. □

THE ADVOCATE

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for a long time," she says. "It has been a whirlwind."

The youngest of four, Chukwu, 34, was born in Port Harcourt, in southern

Nigeria. Her parents, who were petroleum engineers, moved the family to Oklahoma when Chukwu was just over a year old; when she was six, they relocated to Fairbanks, Alaska, though they still visited Nigeria often. It didn't take long before Chukwu sensed how different she was from her classmates: "I was the first African, let alone Nigerian, they had ever met. I felt my otherness. It was a struggle, and I wanted to fit in." She suffered from depression, a condition not helped by the limited wintertime daylight. But she read Maya Angelou and joined the weight-lifting club, and she knew she wanted to make movies. "I dreamed in scenes," she recalls—and wrote down ideas for films and music videos in a journal she carried around with her. Writing was how she escaped the darkness of her emotions. Alone in her bedroom she would build fantasies about dating and prom, and stories about Nigerian-American girls reconnecting with lost siblings or loves.

Chukwu never felt American enough in Fairbanks, nor Nigerian enough in Nigeria. Almost two decades later, she would get a tattoo on her wrist that reads ENOUGH—a reminder of her self-worth. She went to DePauw University, in Indiana, because of the generous financial aid it offered her, and studied English, with a focus on screenwriting. College was where she began to exercise the traits that would lead her to Sundance: an ability to calculate how to get what she wanted, and a singular drive to then do it. During her senior year, she made her first short film, independent of her classwork, about black female experiences at the university. "The women she interviewed really illustrated the diversity of black womanhood in a place where people assumed all black people were the same," says Latrice Ferguson, Chukwu's close friend from college. Both were bookish students, but they laughed a lot and had impromptu dance parties, supporting each other during what Chukwu describes as difficult years on a campus where she felt alienated. Pursuing film helped give her clarity. "When she started, it felt divine: It was not only what she wanted to do, but it's something that was clearly meant to be," Ferguson says.

After Chukwu graduated, she decided that she was going to take better care of herself—get outside more, worry less about what people thought of her, and go to therapy. She enrolled in film school at Temple University in Philadelphia and made three short films, experimenting with themes about reconnection and moving between cultures. She also started teaching third grade at a public school in North Philadelphia. "Teaching was the single most life-changing experience I ever had," Chukwu says. "It expanded my capacity for joy and empathy. It made me realize that I'm living for more than just myself. The black girls would just stare at me, and I realized they were seeing themselves in me, and they were watching my every move—that's powerful, my God."

But her first feature film, *AlaskaLand,* about an estranged pair of Nigerian-American siblings who find their way back to each other, was rejected from every festival and lab program she applied to. The setback forced her to lean into teaching; she was now instructing college students at Rutgers in New Jersey. *AlaskaLand* did eventually play in a few festivals and find a digital distributor. She made two more challenging short films, one about the power dynamics between a lesbian couple arguing about who will be on top during sex, and another about a boy who is publicly shamed by his father for dressing in feminine clothes.

In 2011, she started reading about Davis, who was due to be executed by lethal injection in a few weeks—the fourth time the capital punishment had been rescheduled. Davis had been convicted of murder in 1991 but had maintained his innocence. There was no forensic evidence linking him to the crime, and seven of the nine witnesses from the original trial had recanted their testimonies.

"I remember reading the letter that retired wardens and directors of corrections wrote to the governor pleading for clemency," says Chukwu. "They spoke to the emotional and psychological consequences of killing on the prison staff. I never thought about the actual physical act of killing." She felt emotional the night of Davis's death, and then angry and frustrated the next morning. While she was riding a bus that day, images began to form in her mind. She decided her film would focus on someone intimately involved with carrying out an execution, and this led her to conceive of Woodard's character.

"I read the script, and it was powerful in its simplicity and straightforwardness," Woodard tells me. "Chinonye listened; she watched; she adjusted. In every department, she was the maestro. She's smart, and I went into business with her because she was a person who was committed to becoming a part of the world that she wanted to present to the world, and I respect that." Chukwu took her on a tour of prisons in Ohio, an experience that Woodard says left her "shaken."

In 2013, two years after Davis's execution, Chukwu began research for the film in earnest. She talked to former and current prison wardens and death-row lawyers, and moved to Ohio the following year to teach at a small college and to volunteer on clemency cases. She shot videos of people involved in the inmates' lives to be used in hearings, worked on their media campaigns for public support, and talked for hours with the incarcerated individuals and their families. "I needed to advocate," Chukwu says. "That was a really important part of the filmmaking process." In 2016, she began teaching women at a prison in Dayton to make their own short films; the women came up with stories that often drew from their experiences of addiction and abuse. "I wanted them to see that they were more than their convictions," she says. At the end of 2017, she moved to Los Angeles and went into preproduction on *Clemency*. She shot the film in 17 days in a defunct jail in East Los Angeles.

Chukwu is thinking of the ways her film can affect how her audiences regard incarcerated people—ideally moving viewers not to define others by their worst acts but rather to think of prisoners as complex humans. A similar impulse inspires her upcoming biopic of Elaine Brown, the sole woman to lead the Black Panther Party. "One of my intentions in my filmmaking is to humanize black women and girls," she says. "You don't necessarily have to like them, but you can empathize with them."

Her struggle has also led her to extend a more forgiving attitude to herself—despite the projects on the horizon, she's conscious not to let work consume her. Chukwu enjoys traveling, particularly to the Mediterranean, and says she tries to go to new restaurants in L.A. as much as she can. She finds herself returning to films that influenced her own work, like Hungarian filmmaker Béla Tarr's *Werckmeister*

Harmonies ("delicious"), Kasi Lemmons's *Eve's Bayou,* and Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth.* The last great film she saw, she says, was Julius Onah's thriller *Luce.* Chukwu says she now feels "at peace" after spending much of the year adjusting to her sudden success: "I was used to the uphill climb; now I can enjoy the view a little bit more. But I'm just getting started. There's still so much more to do." □

JUMP CUT

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about the history of photography and post-1950s abstract painting and sculpture, and, as a result, arrived at school better informed than many of his freshman classmates. His student work impressed his teachers by mimicking the style of Robert Frank, Henri Cartier-Bresson, or Ansel Adams, and by the time he was 19, he was having exhibitions. "I was really cocky," he admits. The Art Institute of Chicago bought a photograph out of his first solo show. Thelma Golden, then a young curator at the Studio Museum in Harlem, saw that photograph and put it in "Freestyle," her legendary 2001 exhibition of what she termed "post-black" art. The exhibition, which included Julie Mehretu, Mark Bradford, and Eric Wesley, placed him on the art world's rapidly changing map.

Though there was substantial interest in his work, he spent the next three years on his own in his studio, reading omnivorously and trying to figure out what sort of artist he could be. In 2004, he entered the Art Institute of Chicago as a graduate student; there he met his future wife, Sheree Hovsepian, an artist who works in photography and collage. He left before graduation to mount a show in Italy and didn't go back. "I got the experience I was looking for," he says. (The Institute recently gave him an honorary degree.)

When he and Hovsepian moved to New York in 2005, she tended bar at Good World on the Lower East Side, near their apartment, and Johnson subsidized the rent by letting the belly dancers working at the Greek restaurant upstairs change in his basement studio. "I'm not good at the logistics of life," he says, "like meetings, day jobs, paying bills, or writing emails, the things people do to make them part of the group that we call human beings."

It's after two o'clock, time for lunch. Hovsepian comes in to pick up Bruno, their frantically barking Labradoodle, and take him outside, and we follow. There are four cars in the driveway and two in the garage, a Mercedes and a Tesla—he chooses the Tesla, and I follow him to Bobby Van's in Bridgehampton. When we're seated, I ask what "post-black art" means to him. "It's something Thelma came up with," he says. "I think she was talking about a generation of artists who grew up with a keen sense of their coloredness, but who were also trained in the Western tradition, invested in the ideas introduced by Duchamp as much as in the Negro spiritual. But it's not something that I've ever identified myself with. When I'm asked about it, I often say that I am currently and presently black."

Unlike many black artists of his generation and younger, he does not portray the black figure. But his own body is present in the materials he uses (black soap, shea butter) and what he does with them. The semiabstract, cartoonlike evocations of the figure

In This Issue

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IT'S TIME TO FASHION THE FUTURE

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by Jean Dubuffet, Philip Guston, and George Condo are major influences. "The thing those guys did that I feel real kinship to is employing the concept of the body or the face as a stand-in for emotions or ideas or ways of seeing and feeling. Talking to George the other day, I said, 'You don't paint people. You paint emotions.' " Condo echoes this idea: "Rashid's work confronts and reflects the angst and the emotional crisis of our time," he tells me. "Broken faces, broken people put back together again in his multicolored ceramic-tile paintings are cosmic entities of abstraction. He's one of the few larger-than-life artists working today."

In late September I visit Johnson in his supersize studio in Bushwick, Brooklyn. He's wearing his summer uniform—black Rick Owens T-shirt and capri pants (in winter, the same black T-shirt with Saint Laurent black jeans). The studio is full of work for his show at Hauser & Wirth: large, colorful mosaic paintings along with oversize ceramic sculptures of the same blocky heads that appear in the mosaics, and a series of "Escape Collages" with cut-up images of palm trees, the ocean, African masks—symbols of the kind of exotic places his family couldn't afford to take him on vacation when he was growing up. "I remember kids coming back wearing T-shirts with palm trees from Orlando and other places that felt so far away from me, so mystical." Six assistants work in the studio, and two cats live here because Julius is allergic to cat fur. Johnson and his son have the same birthday, which they've just celebrated. (A long table is being set up in the studio for the eight-year-old and about 50 of his friends, who will go wild there tomorrow.) As we're talking, a painting is delivered—it's a portrait of Johnson by his friend Henry Taylor, the much-admired Los Angeles artist. The scene is chaotic; Johnson is relaxed, perfectly at home in his skin.

There will be one really big sculpture in the show, a huge bronze head with a palm tree growing out of the top and cacti, grasses, and ferns growing out of the eyes and sides. "I've always thought about connecting plants from different places and putting them together in unexpected ways," he says. "It was explained to me once that creativity is best thought of as a person who is willing to connect disconnected things. Artists are not looking for the logical solution, or the most tasteful or pragmatic solution. We're often looking for the disparate solution, the disconnected, desperate, unhealthy, unthoughtful solution that we can bring into the world, and maybe it changes how we think. That's kind of the goal. The first guy who put peanut butter and jelly together probably wasn't celebrated, but now we all believe it to be true."

Johnson's work has always been closely aligned with music, and even when it is not an explicit part of an exhibition, the work has musical inspiration. For the current show, it's the album *Volunteered Slavery* from the late jazz musician Rahsaan Roland Kirk, particularly a song called "Search for the Reason Why." He plays a snippet for me on his iPhone. "He's asking you to search for why," Johnson says. "And that's it—that's why I come here every day. Not that my thinking is more important or more interesting than the way anyone else thinks, but I feel like I'm the only me—and I'm really excited to share." □

($2,565), blouse ($790), shorts ($520), and boots ($1,140); Bergdorf Goodman, NYC. On Forrest: Sweatshirt ($480), pants ($995), and boots ($960). Sweatshirt and pants at Opening Ceremony, NYC. Boots at Bergdorf Goodman, NYC. On Abioro: Coat ($1,980), floral shirt ($1,170), embellished shirt (price upon request), skirt ($1,185), and sandals ($880). Coat, floral shirt, and skirt at Bergdorf Goodman, NYC. Sandals at Saks Fifth Avenue stores. On Taylor: Coat ($2,620), ruffled top ($1,300), jeans ($600), and boots ($1,045); Bergdorf Goodman, NYC. Manicurist, Yuko Tsuchihashi. Tailor, Leah Huntsinger.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME
68–69: On Graham: Blouse, $2,295; Brunello Cucinelli, NYC. Azlee black enamel–and–diamond rings ($2,230 each) and earring ($5,550 for pair); azleejewelry.com. On Ervin: Jeans, $195; rag-bone .com. In this story: Manicurist, Megumi Yamamoto. Tailor, Christy Rilling Studio.

NO LIMITS
72–73: Platinum-and-diamond earrings (price upon request) and platinum ring with yellow sapphire and diamonds ($145,000); tiffany.com. Shoes, $650; jimmychoo.com. **75:** Dress, $12,990; Oscar de la Renta stores. Platinum-and-diamond bracelet, $145,000; tiffany.com. On Kulture: Dress, $208; maisonette .com. In this story: Manicurist, Megumi Yamamoto. Tailor, Christy Rilling Studio.

LABOR OF LOVE
78–79: Dress, $10,900; Valentino stores. Marc Jacobs earring, $175 for pair; marcjacobs.com. **81:** Coat (price upon request) and pants ($4,000); select Chanel stores. Monique Péan earrings ($9,980) and ring ($4,890); moniquepean.com. Shoes, price upon request; Gianvito Rossi stores. In this story: Manicurist, Megumi Yamamoto. Tailor, Christy Rilling Studio.

THE ADVOCATE
82–83: Leather jacket ($6,790), skirt ($4,250), and belt ($990); Alexander McQueen, NYC. Earring, $4,230 for pair; anakhouri.com. Ariana Boussard-Reifel earring, worn in hair, $695 for pair; arianaboussardreifel.com. Boots, $1,095; manoloblahnik.com. Manicurist, Yuko Tsuchihashi. Tailor, Christy Rilling Studio.

REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL
88: Necklace ($1,695) and shoes ($745). **89:** Dress, $6,500. Hat, price upon request. **91:** Belted dress, bag, and shoes, priced upon request. **92:** Dress, $5,490. **93:** Coat ($6,660) and skirt (price upon request). **94:** Shoes, price upon request. **95:** Tights (price upon request) and mini bucket bag ($2,250). Manicurist, Andrea Escoria. Tailor, Olga Meverden.

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96–97: 5. Dress, $3,900. **7.** Diamond–and–Scandinavian meteorite specimen ring, $5,680. **11.** Boot, price upon request; casadei.com for information. **12.** Champagne case, $3,460. **16.** Bag, price upon request.

LAST LOOK
106: "Kelly Picnic" wicker-and-leather bag, $18,400.

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Last Look



Hermès bag

Though it evokes everything from sun-dappled naps beneath a tree to alfresco meals served on a checkerboard blanket, the construction of this bag is no picnic. This summery rendition of the Hermès Kelly bag is one of the maison's most time-consuming creations: The finest strands of willow are first sourced and scoured, then dried and woven and shaped with a calfskin leather flap and handle. It all makes for an accessory that's as prim—and as perfect—as its famously ladylike namesake.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY PETER LANGER

DETAILS, SEE IN THIS ISSUE